

SONGS OF TWO WORLDS



Arch. Scott

SONGS OF TWO WORLDS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE EPIC OF HADES"
[Lewis Morris]

Φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσιν

SEVENTH EDITION

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1882

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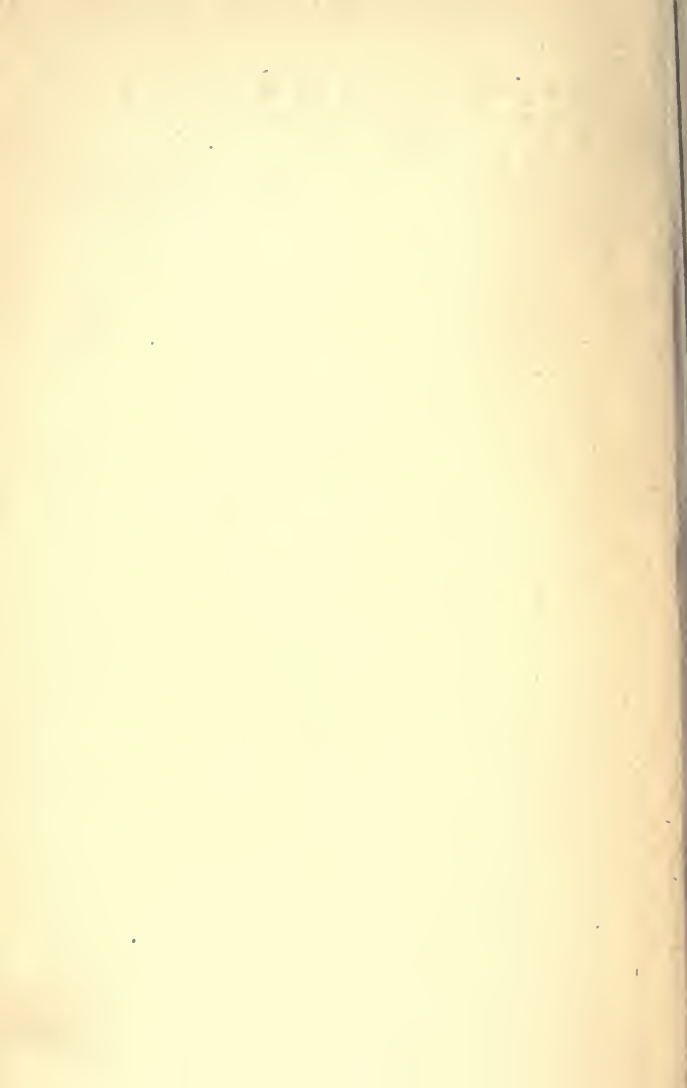
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1872.





SONGS OF TWO WORLDS.



SOUL-MUSIC.

My soul is as a bird
Singing in fair weather,
Deep in shady woodlands through the evening's
dewy calm ;
Every glossy feather
On her full throat stirred,
As she pours out, rapt, unconscious, all the
sweetness of her psalm ;
Mounting high, and higher, higher,
Soaring now, now falling, dying ;
Now through silvery pauses sighing ;
Throbbing now with joyous strife,
And rushing tides of love and life,
Till some ray of heavenly fire

Shot obliquely through the shade,
Pierces her ; and lo ! the strain
Of the music she has made
Fills her with a sudden pain.

Then she forgets to sing
Her former songs of gladness ;
Sitting mute in silence sweeter than the old
forgotten lays ;
Till anon some note of sadness,
Long-drawn, languishing,
Faint at first, swells onward slowly to a subtler
depth of praise,
As the low, wild, minor, broken
By the ghosts of gayer fancies,
Like a rippling stream advances,
Till the full tide grown too deep,
Whispers first, then falls asleep.
Then, as souls with no word spoken
Grow together, she, mute and still,
Thrills through with a secret voice,
Which the farthest heaven can fill,
And constrains her to rejoice.

And the passer-by who hears,
Not the burst of pleasure,
Swelling upward, sweet, spontaneous, to the
portals of the sky,

But a chastened measure,
Low and full of tears ;
And anon the voiceless silence, when the last
 notes sink and die,
Deems some influence malign,
Checks the current of her song ;
For that none are happy long.
Nay ; but to the rapt soul come
Sounds that strike the singer dumb,
And the silence is Divine ;
For when heaven gives back the strain,
All its joyous tones are o'er ;
First the low sweet notes of pain,
Then, the singer sings no more.

LOVE'S MIRROR.

I SEE myself reflected in thine eyes,
The dainty mirrors set in golden flame
Of eyelash, quiver with a sweet surprise,
 And most ingenuous shame.

Like Eve, who hid her from the dread command
Deep in the dewy blooms of paradise ;
So thy shy soul, love calling, fears to stand
 Discovered at thine eyes.

Or, like a tender little fawn, which lies
Asleep amid the fern, and waking, hears
Some careless footstep drawing near, and flies,
Yet knows not what she fears :

So shrinks thy soul ; but, dearest, shrink not so ;
Look thou into mine eyes as I in thine :
So our reflected souls shall meet and grow,
And each with each combine

In something nobler ; as when one has laid
Opposite mirrors on a cottage wall ;
And lo ! the never-ending colonnade,
The vast palatial hall.

So our twin souls, by one sweet suicide,
Shall fade into an essence more sublime ;
Living through death, and dying glorified,
Beyond the touch of time.

ON A YOUNG POET.

HERE lay him down in peace to take his rest,
Who tired of singing ere the day was done.
A little time, a little, beneath the sun,
He tarried and gave forth his artless song ;
The bird that sings with the dawn, sings not for long,
Only when dew is on the grass his breast
Quivers, but his voice is silent long ere noon.
So sang he once, but might not long sustain
The high pure note of youth, for soon, too soon !
He ceased to know the sweet creative pain
Made still one voice, amid the clamorous strife,
And proved no more the joys or pains of life.

And better so than that his voice should fail,
And sink to earth, and lose its heavenlier tone ;
Perchance, if he had stayed, the sad world's moan,
The long low discord of incessant wrong,
Had marred the perfect cadence of his song,
And made a grosser music to prevail.
But now it falls as pure upon the ear,
As sings the brown bird to the star of eve,

Or child's voice in grey minster quiring clear.
Rather then, give we thanks for him than grieve.
Thoughts of pure joys which but in memory live,
More joy than lower present joys can give.

For him, deep rest or high spontaneous strains ;
For us, fierce strife and low laborious song ;
For him, truth's face shining out clear and strong ;
For us half lights, thick clouds, and darkling days.
No longer walks his soul in mortal ways,
Nor thinks our thoughts, nor feels our joys or pains
Nor doubts our doubts, nor any more pursues,
Knowing all things, the far-off searchless cause ;
Nor thrills with art, or nature's fairest hues,
Gazing on absolute beauty's inmost laws ;
Or lies for ever sunk in dreamless sleep,
Nor recks of us ;—and therefore 'tis we weep.

But surely if he sleep, some fair faint dream,
Some still small whisper from his ancient home,
Not joy, nor pain, but mixt of each shall come ;
Or if he wake, the thought of earthly days
Shall add a tender sweetness to his praise ;
Tempering the unbroken joyance of his theme.
And by-and-by the time shall come when we,
Laden with all our lives, once more shall meet,
Like friends, who after infinite wastes of sea,
Look in each other's eyes ; and lo ! the sweet

Sad fount of memory to its depths is stirred,
And the past lives again, without a word.

Mourn not for him ! perchance he lends his voice
To swell the fulness of the eternal psalm ;
Or haply, wrapt in nature's holy calm,
Safe hid within the fruitful womb of earth,
He ripens slowly to a higher birth.
Mourn not for him ! but let your souls rejoice.
We know not what we shall be, but are sure
The spark once kindled by the eternal breath,
Goes not out quite, but somewhere doth endure
In that strange life we blindly christen death.
Somewhere he is, though where we cannot tell ;
But wheresoe'er God hides him, it is well.

TO THE SETTING SUN.

STAY, O sweet day, nor fleet so fast away
For now it is that life revives again,
As the red tyrant sinks beneath the hill ;
And now soft dews refresh the arid plain ;
And now the fair bird's voice begins to thrill ;
With hidden dolours making sweet her strain
And wakes the woods that all day were so still.

Stay, O sweet day, nor fleet so fast away ;
For now the rose and all fair flowers that blow
Give out sweet odours to the perfumed air,
And the white palace marbles blush and glow,
And the low, ivy-hidden cot shows fair.

Why are time's feet so swift, and ours so slow ?
Haste, laggard ! night will fall ere you are there.

Stay, O sweet day, nor fleet so fast away ;
Soon the pale full-faced moon will slowly climb
Up the steep sky and quench the star of love.
Moonlight is fair, but fairer far the time
When through the leaves the golden shafts above
Slope, and the minster sounds its faint low chime,
And the long shadows lengthen through the grove.

Stay, O sweet day, nor fleet so fast away ;

For, hark ! the chime throbs from the darkling tower ;
Soon for the last time shall my love be here :

Fair day, renew thy rays for one brief hour.

O sweet day, tarry for us, tarry near ;

To-morrow, love and time will lose their power,
And sighs be mine, and the unbidden tear.

Stay, O sweet day, nor fleet so fast away.

But, ah ! thou may'st not ; in the far-off west
Impatient lovers weary till you rise ;

Or may be caring naught thou traversest
The plains betwixt thee and thy final skies :

Go, then ; though darkness come, we shall be blest,
Keeping sweet daylight, in each other's eyes.



THE TREASURE OF HOPE.

O FAIR bird, singing in the woods,

To the rising and the setting sun,

Does ever any throb of pain

Thrill through thee ere thy song be done :

Because the summer fleets so fast ;

Because the autumn fades so soon ;

Because the deadly winter treads

So closely on the steps of June ?

O sweet maid, opening like a rose
In love's mysterious, honeyed air,
Dost think sometimes the day will come
When thou shalt be no longer fair :
When love will leave thee and pass on
To younger and to brighter eyes ;
And thou shalt live unloved, alone,
A dull life, only dowered with sighs ?

O brave youth, panting for the fight,
To conquer wrong and win thee fame,
Dost see thyself grown old and spent,
And thine a still unhonoured name :
When all thy hopes have come to naught,
And all thy fair schemes droop and pine
And wrong still lifts her hydra heads
To fall to younger arms than thine ?

Nay ; song and love and lofty aims
May never be where faith is not ;
Strong souls within the present live ;
The future veiled,—the past forgot :
Grasping what is, with hands of steel,
They bend what shall be, to their will ;
And blind alike to doubt and dread,
The End, for which they are, fulfil.

THE LEGEND OF FAITH.

THEY say the Lord of time and all the worlds,
Came to us once, a feeble, new-born child ;
All-wise, yet dumb ; weak, though omnipotent :
Surely a heaven-sent vision, for it tells
How innocence is godlike. And the Lord
Renews, through childhood, to our world-dimmed eyes,
The half forgotten splendours of the skies.

And because motherhood is sacreder
And purer far than any fatherhood,
White flowers are fairer than red fruit, and sense
Brings some retributive pain ; the virgin queen
Sits 'mid the stars, and cloistered courts are filled
With vain regrets, dead lives, and secret sighs,
And the long pain of weary litanies.

And because we, who stand upon the shore,
See the cold wave sweep up and take with it
White spotless souls, and others lightly soiled.

Yet with no stain God deems indelible :
These are His saints mighty to intercede,
Those in some dim far country tarry, and there
Are purified ; and both are reached by prayer.

And as the faith once given changes not,
But we are weak as water ; yet is life
A process, and where growth is not is death.
God gave His priests infallible power to tell
The true faith as it is, and how it grew :
And lo ! the monstrous cycle shows complete,
And the Church brings the nations to her feet.



BY THE SEA.

A LITTLE country churchyard,
On the verge of a cliff by the sea ;
Ah ! the thoughts of the long years past and gone
That the vision brings back to me.

For two ways led from the village,—
One, by the rippled sands,
With their pink shells fresh from the ebbing wave
For childish little hands.

And one 'mid the heath, and the threat'ning
Loud bees with the yellow thighs,
And, twinkling out of the golden furze,
The marvellous butterflies.

And the boom of the waves on the shingle,
And the hymn of the lark to the sun ;
Made Sabbath sounds of their own, ere the chime
Of the church-going bell had begun.

I remember the churchyard studded
With peasants who loitered and read
The sad little legends, half effaced,
On the moss-grown tombs of the dead.

And the gay graves of little children,
Fashioned like tiny cots ;
With their rosemary and southernwood,
And blue-eyed forget-me-nots.

Till the bell by degrees grew impatient,
Then ceased as the parsonage door
Opened wide for the surpliced vicar,
And we loitered and talked no more.

I remember the cool, dim chancel,
And the drowsy hum of the prayers ;
And the rude psalms vollied from sea-faring throats
As if to take heaven unawares.

Till, when sermon-time came, by permission
We stole out among the graves,
And saw the great ocean a-blaze in the sun,
And heard the deep roar of the waves.

And clung very close together,
As we spelt out with wonder and tears,
How a boy lay beneath who was drowned long ago,
And was "Aged eleven years."

And heard, with a new-born terror,
The first surge of the infinite Sea,
Whose hither-shore is the shore of Death,
And whose further, the Life to be.

“Did the sea swallow up little children?
Could God see the wickedness done?
Nor spare one swift-winged seraph to save
From the thousands around His throne?”

“Was he still scarce older than we were,
Still only a boy of eleven?
Were child-angels children always
In the beautiful courts of heaven?”

Ah me! of those childish dreamers,
One has solved the dark riddle since then:
And knows the dread secret which none may know
Who walk in the ways of men.

The other has seen the splendour
And mystery fading away;
Too wise or too dull to take thought or care
For aught but the needs of the day.



VOICES.

OH ! sometimes when the solemn organ rolls
Its stream of sound down gray historic aisles ;
Or the full, high-pitched struggling symphony
Pursues the fleeting melody in vain :
Like a fawn through shadowy groves, or heroine
Voiced like a lark, pours out in burning song
Her love or grief ; or when, to the rising stars
Linked village maidens chant the hymn of eve ;
Or Sabbath concourse, flushed and dewy-eyed
Booms its full bass ; or before tasks begun,
Fresh childish voices sanctify the morn :
My eyes grow full, my heart forgets to beat.
What is this mystic yearning fills my being ?

Hark ! the low music wakes, and soft and slow
Wanders at will through flowery fields of sound ;
Climbs gentle hills, and sinks in sunny vales,
And stoops to cull sweet way-side blooms, and weave
A dainty garland ; then, grown tired, casts down
With careless hand the fragrant coronal,
And child-like sings itself to sleep.

Anon

The loud strain rises like a strong knight armed,
Battling with wrong ; or passionate seer of God
Scathing with tongue of fire the hollow shows,
The vain deceits of men ; or law-giver,
Parting in thunder from the burning hill
With face aflame ; or with fierce rush of wings
And blazing brand, upon the crest of Sin,
The swift archangel swooping ; or the roll
Which follows on the lightning ;—all are there
In that great hurry of sound.

And then the voice

Grows thinner like a lark's, and soars and soars,
And mounts in circles, higher, higher, higher,
Up to heaven's gate, and lo ! the unearthly song
Thrills some fine inner chord, and the swift soul,
Eager and fluttering like a prisoned bird,
Breaks from its cage, and soars aloft to join
The enfranchised sound, and for a moment seems
To touch on some dim border-land of being,
Full of high thought and glorious enterprise
And vague creative fancies, till at length
Waxed grosser than the thin ethereal air,
It sinks to earth again.

And then a strain

Sober as is the tender voice of home,
Unbroken like a gracious life, and lo
Young children sit around me, and the love

I never knew is mine, and so my eyes
Grow full, and all my being is thrilled with tears.

What is this strange new life, this finer sense,
This passionate exaltation, which doth force
Like the weird Indian juggler, instantly
My soul from seed to flower, from flower to fruit,
Which lifts me out of self, and bids me tread
Without a word, on reeling dizzy peaks,
Impossible else, and rise to glorious thoughts,
High hopes, and inarticulate fantasies
Denied to soberer hours? No spoken thought
Of bard or seer can mount so far, or lift
The soul to such transcendent heights, or work
So strong a spell of love, or roll along
Such passionate troubled depths. No painter's hand
Can limn so clear, the luminous air serene
Of Paradise, the halcyon deep, the calm
Of the eternal snows, the eddy and whirl
Of mortal fight, the furious flood let loose
From interlacing hills, the storm which glooms
Over the shoreless sea. Our speech too oft
Is bound and fettered by such narrow laws,
That words which to one nation pierce the heart,
To another are but senseless sounds, or weak
And powerless to stir the soul; but this
Speaks with a common tongue, uses a speech
Which all may understand, or if it bear

Some seeds of difference in it, only such
As separates gracious sisters, like in form,
But one by gayer fancies touched, and one
Rapt by sweet graver thoughts alone, and both
Mighty to reach the changing moods of the soul,
Or grave or gay, and though sometimes they be
Mated with unintelligible words,
Or feeble and unworthy, yet can lend
A charm to gild the worthless utterance,
And wing the sordid chrysalis to float
Amid the shining stars.

Oh strange sweet power,
Ineffable, oh gracious influence,
I know not whence thou art, but this I know.
Thou holdest in thy hand the silver key
That can unlock the sacred fount of tears,
Which falling make life green ; the hidden spring
Of purer fancies and high sympathies :
No mirth is thine, thou art too high for mirth,—
Like Him who wept but smiled not : mirth is born
On the low plains of thoughts best reached by words.
But those who scale the untrodden mountain peak,
Or sway upon the trembling spire, are far
From laughter ; so thy gracious power divine,
Not sad but solemn, moves the well of tears,
But not mirth's shallow spring : tears are divine,
But mirth is of the earth, a creature born
Of careless youth and joyance ; satisfied

With that which is ; urged by no nobler thirst
For that which might be ; pained by no regret
For that which was, but is not : but for thee.
Oh, fair mysterious power, the whole great scheme
Lies open like a book ; and if the charm
Of its high beauty makes thee sometimes gay,
Yet 'tis an awful joy, so mixed with thought,
That even Mirth grows grave, and evermore
The myriad possibilities unfulfilled,
The problem of Creation, the immense
Impenetrable depths of thought, the vague
Perplexities of being, rise to thy lips
And keep thee solemn always.

Oh, fair voice,

Oh virginal, sweet interpreter, reveal
Our inner selves to us, lay bare the springs
The hidden depths of being, the high desires
Which lie there unsuspected, the remorse
Which never woke before ; unclothe the soul
Of this its shroud of sense, and let it mount,
On the harmonious beat of thy light wings,
Up to those heights where life is so attuned,
So pure and self-concordant ; filled so deep
With such pervading beauty that no voice
Breaks the ineffable harmony of being,
And o'er white plain and breathless summit reigns
A silence sweeter than the sweetest sound.

WEAKNESS MADE STRONG.

If I were poor and weak,
Bankrupt of hope, and desolate of love ;
Without a tongue to speak
The strange dumb thoughts of thee which through
me move ;
Then would I freely venture, sweet,
To cast my soul down at thy feet.

Or were I proud and great ;
Were all men envious, and all women kind
And yet my high estate
Showed poor beside the riches of my mind :
Then would I boldly stoop, to rise
Up to the height of thy dear eyes.

But being not weak nor strong,
Cast in the common mould of coarser clay ;
Sure 'twere to do thee wrong
To set my humble homage in thy way,
And cloud thy sunny morn, which I would fain
Keep clear and fair, with my poor private pain.

Only since love and I are so ingrown,
That for my weakness is my love so strong ;
And scarce I know what love's is, what mine own.
Nor whether love or I inspire my song :
Take thou my strength unto thyself, and give
Strength to my weakness, sweet, and bid me live.

WAKING.

OPEN, my soul, thy stately portals wide ;
Open full wide, and let thy King come in !
How shall he come ? In royal pomp and pride,
Ushered by braying trumpets' clamorous din ;
Clothed round with purple ; crowned with burning gold :
A kingly presence, glorious to behold ?

Nay ; for he is no mortal king, to come
With trumpet peals and crowds and garish state ;
But silent to the soul he makes his home,
He enters by some lowly postern gate !
And she, within her chambers far withdrawn,
Cries like the wakeful bird that greets the dawn.

It may be she is seated 'mid the throng,
Crowned with the flowers of life and youth and health ;
Thrilled through by breathing art or passionate song,
Or faint with hot pursuit of fame or wealth ;

Rapt by the glorious thoughts of saints or seers,
Or radiant with the blessed dew of tears.

And then the wicket swings without a sound,

And lo ! a ghostly presence, pale and gray,—
Sad eyes which dwell not on the things around,
But gaze for ever on the Far-off Day !

Then a low voice, whispering, “ Thy King is come ;
Rejoice, be glad, for here he makes his home.”

Then rises she and hastens to the gate,—

Her royal gate, and there she casts her down :
Prone at his feet bewails her low estate,

Yet prays him he will enter to his own !
Spurns from her all her robes of pride, and stands,
Knowing her shame, to do her Lord's commands,

Whom with a touch he fashions for her part ;

Dowers with the precious gifts of bard or sage ;
The hand to fix the dreams of deathless art,

The imperial will, the patriot's noble rage :
Or fills with such fine affluence of love,
That she grows holy as the saints above.

Then open, O my soul ! thy portals wide,

Open, and let thy Lord and Ruler come ;
Open, if haply he may here abide,

And make within thee his eternal home.
Open thy gates, thy halls, thine inmost shrine,
Till all are flooded with the Light divine.

AT HAVRE DE GRACE.

ABOVE the busy Norman town,
The high precipitous sea-cliffs rise,
And from their summit looking down
The twin-lights shine with lustrous eyes ;
Far out upon the fields of foam,
The first to greet the wanderer home.

Man here has known at last to tame
Nature's wild forces to his will ;
Those are the lightning's fires which flame,
From yon high towers with ray so still :
And knowledge, piercing through the night
Of time, has summoned forth the light.

And there, hard by the lighthouse door,
The earthly set by the divine ;
At a stone's cast, or scarcely more,
Rises a little pagan shrine,
Where the rough seamen come to pray,
And wives, for dear ones far away.

There, on a starry orb, there stands
A heavenly goddess, proud and fair ;
No infant holds she in her hands
Which must a queenly sceptre bear.
Nay ; wonder not, for this is she
Who rules the fury of the sea.

Star of the sea, they call her, yet
Liker to Heré doth she show,
Than Aphrodité, rising wet
From the white waves, with limbs aglow.
Calmer she seems, more pure and sweet,
To the poor kneelers at her feet.

Before her still the vestal fires
Burn unextinguished day and night ;
And the sweet frankincense expires
And fair flowers blow, and gems are bright :
For a great power in heaven is she,
This star and goddess of the sea.

Around the temple, everywhere,
Rude tablets hung, attest her might ;
Here the fierce surge she smooths, and there
Darts downward on a bar of light ;
To quench the blazing ship, or save
The shipwrecked from the hungry wave.

And sea-gifts round the shrine are laid,
Poor offerings, costlier far than gold :
Such as the earlier heathen made,
To the twin Deities of old,—
Toy ships, shells, coral, glittering spar,
Brought here by grateful hands from far.

A very present help indeed,
This goddess is to whom they bow ;
We seek Thy face with hearts that bleed,
And straining eyes, dread Lord ! but Thou
Hidest Thyself so far away,
Our thoughts scarce reach Thee as we pray.

But is this she, whom the still voice
Of angels greeted in the night ;
Bidding the poor maid's heart rejoice,
With visions hid from wiser sight :
This heathen nymph, this tinselled queen,
First of all mothers who have been ?

Gross hearts and purblind eyes, to make
An idol of a soul so sweet !
Could you no meaner essence take,
No brazen image with clay feet ;
No saint from out the crowd of lies,
False signs and shameful prodigies ?

For this one bears too great a name,
Above all other women blest ;
The blessèd mother,—all her fame
Is His who nestled to her breast :
They do but dull her glory down,
These childless arms, this earthly crown.

Poor peasant mother ! scarce a word
Thou spak'st, the long-drawn years retain ;
Only thy womb once bare the Lord ;
Only thou knew'st the joy, the pain,
The high hope seeming quenched in blood
That marked thy awful motherhood.

No trace of all thy life remains,
From His first childhood to the cross ;
A life of little joys and pains,
Of humble gain and trivial loss :
Contented if the ewes should bear
Twin lambs, or wheat were full in ear.

Or if sometimes the memory
Of that dread message of the night
Troubled thy soul, there came to thee
New precious duties ; till the flight,
The desert sands, the kneeling kings,
Showed but as half-forgotten things.

Or sometimes, perhaps, while pondering all
In thy fond heart of word and deed,
Some shade of doubt on thee would fall,
Still faithful to the older creed :
Could this thy Son indeed be He,
This child who prattled at thy knee?

And of thy after-life, thy age,
Thy death, no record ; not a line
On all the fair historic page
To mark the life these hold divine :
Only some vague tradition, faint
As the sick story of a saint.

But thou no longer art to-day
The sweet maid-mother, fair and pure ;
Vast time-worn reverend temples gray,
Throne thee in majesty obscure ;
And long aisles stretch in minsters high,
'Twixt thee, fair peasant, and the sky.

They seek to honour thee, who art
Beyond all else a mother indeed ;
With hateful vows that blight the heart,
With childless lives, and souls that bleed .
As if their dull hymns' barren strain
Could fill a mother with aught but pain !

To the gross earth they bind thee down
With coils of fable, chain on chain ;
From plague or war to save the town ;
To give, or hold ; the sun, or rain ;
To whirl through air a favourite shrine,—
These are thy functions, and divine.

And see, in long procession rise
The fair Madonnas of all time ;
They gaze from sweet maternal eyes,
The dreams of every Christian clime :
Brown girls and icy queens, the breast
And childish lips proclaim them blest.

Till as the gradual legend grew,
Born without stain, and scorning death ;
Heavenward thou soarest through the blue,
While saints and seers aspire beneath :
And fancy-nurtured cam'st to be
Queen over sky and earth and sea.

Oh, sin ! oh, shame ! oh, folly ! Rise ;
Poor heathen, think to what you bow ;
Consider, beyond God's equal skies,
What pains that faithful soul must know,—
She a poor peasant on the throne
Raised for the Lord of Life, alone.

O sweet ! O heart of hearts ! O pure
Above all purest maids of earth !
O simple child, who didst endure
The burden of that awful birth :
Heart, that the keenest sword didst know,
Soul bowed by alien loads of woe !

Sweet soul ! have pity ; intercede,
Oh mother of mothers, pure and meek ;
They know no evil,—rise and plead
For these poor wandering souls and weak ;
Tear off those pagan rags, and lead
Their worship where 'tis due indeed.

For wheresoever there is home,
And mothers yearn with sacred love,
There, since from Heaven itself they come,
Are symbols of the life above :
Again the sweet maid-mother mild,
Again the God-begotten child.

WHEN I AM DEAD.

WHEN I am dead and turned to dust,
Let men say what they will, I care not aught ;
Let them say I was careless, indolent,
Wasted the precious hours in dreaming thought,
Did not the good I might have done, but spent
My soul upon myself,—sometimes let rise
Thick mists of earth betwixt me and the skies :
What must be must.

But not that I betrayed a trust ;
Broke some girl's heart, and left her to her shame ;
Sneered young souls out of faith ; rose by deceit ;
Lifted by credulous mobs to wealth and fame ;
Waxed fat while good men waned, by lie and cheat ;
Cringed to the strong ; oppressed the poor and weak :
When men say this, may some find voice to speak,
Though I am dust.

LOVE'S SUICIDE.

ALAS for me for that my love is dead !

Sunk fathom-deep, and may not rise again ;
Self-murdered, vanished, fled beyond recall,
And this is all my pain.

'Tis not that she I loved is gone from me,
She lives and grows more lovely day by day ;
Not Death could kill my love, but though she lives,
My love has died away.

Nor was it that a form or face more fair
Forswore my troth, for so my love had proved
Eye-deep alone, not rooted in the soul ;
And 'twas not thus I loved.

Nor that by too long dalliance with delight
And recompense of love, my love had grown
Surfeit with sweets, like some tired bee that flags
'Mid roses over-blown.

None of these slew my love, but some cold wind,
Some chill of doubt, some shadowy dissidence,
Born out of too great concord, did o'ercloud
Love's subtle inner sense.

So one sweet changeless chord, too long sustained,
Falls at its close into a lower tone :
So the swift train, sped on the long, straight way,
Sways, and is overthrown.

For difference is the soul of life and love,
And not the barren oneness weak souls prize :
Rest springs from strife, and dissonant chords beget
Divinest harmonies.

THE RIVER OF LIFE.

BRIGHT with unnumbered laughters, and swollen by a
thousand tears,
Rushes along, through upland and lowland, the river of
life ;
Sometimes foaming and broken, and sometimes silent
and slumbrous,
Sometimes through rocky glens, and sometimes through
flowery plains.
Sometimes the mountains draw near, and the black depths
swirl at their bases,
Sometimes the limitless meads fade on the verge of the
sky,
Sometimes the forests stand round, and the great trees
cast terrible shadows,
Sometimes the golden wheat waves, and girls fill their
pitchers and sing.

Always the same strange flow, through changes and
chances unchanging,

Always—in youth and in age, in calm and in tempest
the same—

Whether it sparkle transparent and give back the blue
like a mirror,

Or sweep on turbid with flood, and black with the
garbage of towns—

Whether the silvery scale of the minnow flash on the
pebbles,

Or whether the poisonous ooze cling for a shroud round
the dead—

Whether it struggle through shoals of white blooms and
feathery grasses,

Or bear on its bosom the hulls of ocean-tost navies—the
same.

Flow on, O mystical river, flow on through desert and
city ;

Broken or smooth, flow onward into the Infinite sea.

Who knows what urges thee on, what dark laws and
cosmical forces

Stain thee or keep thee pure, and bring thee at last to thy
goal ?

What is the cause of thy rest or unrest, of thy foulness
or pureness ?

What is the secret of life, or the painful riddle of death ?

Why is it better to be than to cease, to flow on than to stagnate?

Why is the river-stream sweet, while the sea is as bitter as gall?

Surely we know not at all, but the cycle of Being is eternal,

Life is eternal as death, tears are eternal as joy.

As the stream flowed, it will flow; though 'tis sweet, yet the sea will be bitter:

Foul it with filth, yet the deltas grow green and the ocean is clear.

Always the sun and the winds will strike its broad surface and gather

Some purer drops from its depths, to float in the clouds of the sky;—

Soon these shall fall once again, and replenish the full-flowing river.

Roll round then, O mystical cycle! flow onward, ineffable stream!



A HEATHEN HYMN.

O LORD, the Giver of my days,
My heart is ready, my heart is ready ;
I dare not hold my peace, nor pause,
For I am fain to sing Thy praise.

I praise Thee not, with impious pride,
For that Thy partial hand has given
Bounties of wealth or form or brain,
Good gifts to other men denied.

Nor weary Thee with blind request,
For fancied goods Thy hand withholds ;
I know not what to hope or fear,
Nor aught but that Thy will is best.

Not whence I come, nor whither I go,
Nor wherefore I am here, I know ;
Nor if my life's tale ends on earth,
Or mounts to bliss, or sinks to woe.

Nor know I aught of Thee, O Lord ;
Behind the veil Thy face is hidden :
We faint, and yet Thy face is hidden ;
We cry,—Thou answerest not a word.

But this I know, O Lord, Thou art,
And by Thee I too live and am ;
We stand together, face to face,
Thou the great whole, and I the part.

We stand together, soul to soul,
Alone amidst Thy waste of worlds ;
Unchanged, though all creation fade,
And Thy swift suns forget to roll.

Wherefore, because my life is Thine,
Because, without Thee I were not ;
Because, as doth the sea, the sun,
My nature gives back the Divine.

Because my being with ceaseless flow
Sets to Thee as the brook to the sea ;
Turns to Thee, as the flower to the sun,
And seeks what it may never know.

Because, without me Thou hadst been
For ever, seated midst Thy suns ;
Marking the soulless cycles turn,
Yet wert Thyself unknown, unseen.

I praise Thee, everlasting Lord,
In life and death, in heaven and hell :
What care I, since indeed Thou art,
And I the creature of Thy word.

Only if such a thing may be :
When all Thy infinite will is done,
Take back the soul Thy breath has given,
And let me lose myself in Thee.

IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE.

UNDER the picture gallery wall,
As a sea-leaf clings to a wave-worn rock,
Nor shrinks from the surging impetuous shock
Of the breakers which gather and whiten and fall,—
A child's form crouches, nor seems to heed
The ceaseless eddy and whirl of men :
Men and women with hearts that bleed,
Men and women of wealth and fame,
High in honour, or sunk in shame,
Pass on like phantoms, and pass again.
And he lies there like a weed.

A child's form, said I ; but looking again
It is only the form that is childish now,
For age has furrowed the low dull brow,

And marked the pale face with its lines of pain.
Yet but few years have fled, since I first passed by,
For a dwarf's life is short if you go by the sun,
And marked in worn features and lustreless eye
Some trace of youth's radiance, though faint and thin
But now, oh, strange jest ! there's a beard to his chin.
And he lies there, grown old ere his youth is done,
With his poor limbs bent awry.

What a passer-by sees, is a monstrous head,
With a look in the eyes as of those who gaze
On some far-off sight with a dumb amaze ;
A face as pale as the sheeted dead,
A frail body propped on a padded crutch,
And lean long fingers, which flutter the keys
Of an old accordion, returning their touch
With some poor faint echoes of popular song,
Trivial at all times and obsolete long,
Psalm-tunes, and African melodies,
Not differing very much.

And there he sits nightly in heat and cold,
When the fountains fall soft on the stillness of June,
Or when the sharp East sings its own shrill tune,
Patiently playing and growing old.
The long year waxes and wanes, the great
Flash by in splendour from rout or ball,
Statesmen grown weary with long debate,

Hurry by homewards, and fling him alms ;
Pitiful women, touched by the psalms,
Bringing back innocence, stoop by the wall
Where he lies at Dives' gate.

What are his thoughts of, stranded there ?
While life ebbs and flows by, again and again,
Does the old sad Problem vex his poor brain ?
" Why is the world so pleasant and fair,
Why, am I only who did no wrong
Crippled and bent out of human form ?
Why are other men tall and strong ?
Surely if all men were made to rejoice,
Seeing that we come without will or choice,
It were better to crawl for a day like a worm,
Than to lie like this so long !

" The blind shuffles by with a tap of his staff,
The tired tramp plods to the workhouse ward,—
But he carries his broad back as straight as a lord
And the blind man can hear his little ones laugh,
While I lie here like a weed on the sand,
With these crooked limbs, paining me night and day.
Is it true, what they tell of a far-off land,
In the sweet old faith which was preached for the poor,—
Where none shall be weary or pained any more,
Nor change shall enter nor any decay,
And the stricken down shall stand ? "

And perhaps sometimes when the sky is clear,
And the stars show like lamps on the sweet summer night,
Some chance chord struck with a sudden delight,
Soars aloft with his soul, and brings Paradise near.
And then—for even nature is sometimes kind—
He lies stretched under palms with a harp of gold ;
Or is whirled on by coursers as fleet as the wind ;
And is no more crippled, nor weak nor bent ;
No more painful nor impotent ;
No more hungry, nor weary nor cold,—
But of perfect form and mind.

Or may be his thoughts are of humbler cast,
For hunger and cold are real indeed ;
And he looks for the hour when his toil shall be past,
And he with sufficient for next day's need :
Some humble indulgence of food or fire,
Some music-hall ditty, or marvellous book,
Or whatever it be such poor souls desire ;
And with this little solace, for God would fain
Make even his measures of joy and pain,
He drones happily on in his quiet nook,
With hands that never tire.

Well, these random guesses must go for nought ;
Seeing it is wiser and easier far
To weigh to an atom the faintest star,
Than to sound the dim depths of a brother's thought.

But whenever I hear those poor snatches of song,
And see him lie maimed in body and soul,
While I am straight and healthy and strong,
I seem to redden with a secret shame,
That we should so differ who should be the same,
Till I hear their insolent chariot wheels roll
The millionaires along.



WATCH.

OH, hark ! the languid air is still,
The fields and woods seem hushed and dumb.
But listen, and you shall hear a thrill,
An inner voice of silence come,
Stray notes of birds, the hum of bees,
The brook's light gossip on its way,
Voices of children heard at play,
Leaves whispering of a coming breeze.

Oh, look ! the sea is fallen asleep,
The sail hangs idle evermore ;
Yet reflux from the outer deep,
The low wave sobs upon the shore.

Silent the dark cave ebbs and fills,
 Silent the broad weeds wave and sway ;
 Yet yonder fairy fringe of spray
Is born of surges vast as hills.

Oh, see ! the sky is deadly dark,
 There shines not moon nor any star ;
But gaze awhile, and you shall mark
 Some gleam of glory from afar :
Some half-hid planet's vagrant ray ;
 Some lightning flash which wakes the world ;
 Night's pirate banner slowly furled ;
And, eastward, some faint flush of day.



DROWNED.

ONLY eighteen winters old !

Lay her with a tender hand

On the delicate, ribbed sea-sand : .

Stiff and cold ; ay, stiff and cold.

What she has been, who shall care ?

Looking on her as she lies

With those stony, sightless eyes,

And the sea-weed in her hair.

Think, O mothers ! how the deep

All the dreary night did rave ;

Thundering foam and crested wave,

While your darlings lay asleep.

How she cleft the midnight air ;

And the idiot surge beneath

Whirled her sea-ward to her death,

Angry that she was so fair.

Tossed her, beat her, till no more
Rage could do, through all the night ;
Then with morning's ghastly light,
Flung her down upon the shore.

Mother ! when brief years ago
You were happy in your child,
Smiling on her as she smiled,
Thought you she would perish so ?

Man ! who made her what she is ;
What, if when you falsely swore
You would love her more and more,
You had seen her lie like this.

And, O Infinite Cause ! didst Thou,
When Thou mad'st this hapless child,
Dowered with passions, fierce and wild,
See her lie as she lies now ?

Filled with wild revolt and rage,
All I feel I may not speak ;
Fate so strong, and we so weak,
Like rats in a cage,—like rats in a cage.



THE WANDERER.

I REARED my virgin Soul on dainty food,
I fed her with rich fruit and garnered gold
From those fair gardens sown by pious care
Of precious souls of old.

The long procession of the fabulous Past,
Rolled by for me—the earliest dawn of time ;
The seven great days ; the garden and the sword ;
The first red stain of crime ;

The fierce rude chiefs who smote, and burned, and slew,
And all for God ; the pitiless tyrants grand,
Who piled to heaven the eternal monuments,
Unchanged amid the sand ;

The fairy commonwealths, where Freedom first
Inspired the ready hand and glowing tongue
To a diviner art and sweeter song
Than men have feigned or sung ;

The strong bold sway that held mankind in thrall,
Soldier and jurist marching side by side,
Till came the sure slow blight, when all the world
Grew sick, and swooned, and died ;

Again the long dark night, when Learning dozed
Safe in her cloister, and the world without
Rang with fierce shouts of war and cries of pain,
Base triumph, baser rout ;

Till rose a second dawn of light again,
Again the freemen stood in firm array
Behind the foss, and Pope and Kaiser came,
Wondered and turned away ;

And then the broadening stream, till the sleek priest
Aspired to tread the path the Pagan trod,
And Rome fell once again, and the brave North
Rose from the church to God.

All these passed by for me, till the vast tide
Grew to a sea too wide for any shore ;
Then doubt o'erspread me, and a cold disgust,
And I would look no more.

For something said, " The Past is dead and gone,
Let the dead bury their dead, why strive with Fate ?
Why seek to feed the children on the husks
Their rude forefathers ate ? "

“For even were the Past reflected back
As in a mirror, in the historic page,
For us its face is strange, seeing that the race
Betters from age to age.”

“And if, hearing the tale we told ourselves,
We marvel how the monstrous fable grew ;
How in these far-off years shall men discern
The fictive from the true ?”

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Then turned I to the broad domain of Art,
To seek if haply Truth lay hidden there ;
Well knowing that of old close links connect
The true things and the fair.

Fair forms I found, and rounded limbs divine,
The maiden's grace, the tender curves of youth,
The majesty of happy perfect years,
But only half the truth.

For there is more, I thought, in man, and higher,
Than animal graces cunningly combined ;
Since oft within the unlovely frame is set
The shining, flawless mind.

So I grew weary of the pallid throng,
Deep-bosomed maids and stalwart heroes tall.
One type I saw, one earthy animal seal
Of comeliness in all !

But not the awful, mystical human soul—
The soul that grovels and aspires in turn—
The soul that struggles outwards into light
Through lips and eyes that burn.

So, from the soulless marbles, white and bare
And cold, too-perfect art, I turned and sought
The canvases, where Christian hands have left
The fruits of holy thought.

Passion I found, and love, and godlike pain,
The swift soul rapt by mingled hopes and fears,
Eyes lit with glorious light from the Unseen,
Or dim with sacred tears.

But everywhere around the living tree
I marked the tangled growths of fable twine,
And gross material images confuse
The earthly and divine.

I saw the Almighty Ruler of the worlds,
The one unfailing Source of Light and Love,
A sullen gray-beard set on rolling clouds,
Armed with the bolts of Jove.

The Eternal Son, a shapeless new-born child,
Supine upon His peasant-mother's knees,
Or else a ghastly victim, crushed and worn
By physical agonies.

The virgin mother—now a simple girl ;
Or old and blurred with tears, and wan with sighs ;
And now a goddess, oft-times giving back
The harlot-model's eyes.

Till faring on what spark of heaven was there,
Grew pale, then went out quite ; and in its stead,
Dull copies of dull common life usurped
The empire of the dead.

Or if sometimes, rapt in a sweet suspense,
I knew a passionate yearning thrill my soul,
As down long aisles from lofty quires I heard
The solemn music roll ;

Or if at last the long-drawn symphony,
After much weary wandering seemed to soar
To a finer air, and subtle measures born
On some diviner shore,

I thought how much of poor mechanical skill,
How little fire of heart, or force of brain,
Was theirs who first devised or now declared
That magical sweet strain ;

And how the art was partial, not immense,
As Truth is, or as Beauty, but confined
To this our later Europe, not spread out,
Wide as the width of mind.

So then from Art, and all its empty shows
And outward-seeming truth, I turned and sought
The secret springs of knowledge which lie hid
Deep in the wells of thought.

The hoary thinkers of the Past I knew ;
Whose dim vast thoughts, to too great stature grown,
Flashed round as fitful lightning flashes round
The black vault of the Unknown.

Who, seeing that things are Many, and yet are One ;
That all things suffer change, and yet remain—
That opposite flows from opposite, Life and Death,
Love, Hatred, Pleasure, Pain—

Raised high upon the mystical throne of life
Some dim abstraction, hopeful to unwind
The tangled maze of being, by one rude guess
Of an untutored mind.

The sweet Ideal Essences revealed,
To that high poet-thinker's eyes I saw ;
The archetypes which underset the world
With one broad perfect Law.

The fair fantastic Commonwealth, too fair
For earth, wherein the wise alone bore rule—
So wise that oftentimes the sage himself
Shows duller than the fool ;

And that white soul, clothed with a satyr's form,
Which shone beneath the laurels day by day,
And, fired with burning faith in God and Right,
Doubted men's doubts away ;

And him who took all knowledge for his own,
And with the same swift logical sword laid bare
The depths of heart and mind, the mysteries
Of earth and sea and air ;

And those on whom the visionary East
Worked in such sort, that knowledge grew to seem
An ecstasy, a sudden blaze, revealed
To crown the mystic's dream ;

Till, once again, the old light faded out,
And left no trace of that fair day remain—
Only a barren method, binding down
Men's thoughts with such a chain

That knowledge sank self-slain, like some stout knight
Clogged by his harness ; nor could wit devise
Aught but ignoble quibbles, subtly mixed
With dull theologies.

Not long I paused with these ; but passed to him
Who, stripping, like a skilful wrestler, cast
From his strong arms the precious deadly web,
The vesture of the past ;

And looked in Nature's eyes, and, foot to foot,
Strove with her daily, till the witch at length
Gave up, reluctant, to the eyes of the mind
The secret of her strength.

And then the old fight, fought on modern fields,—
Whether we know by sense or inward sight—
Whether a law within, or use alone,
Mark out the bounds of right—

All these were mine ; and then the ancient doubt,
Which scarce kept silence as this master taught
The undying soul, or that one subtly probed
The process of our thought,

And shuddered at the dreadful innocent talk
To the cicada's chirp beneath the trees—
Love poised on silver wings, love fallen and fouled
By black iniquities ;

And laughed to scorn their quest of cosmic law,
Saw folly in the mystic and the schools,
And in the newer method gleams of truth
Obscured by childish rules ;

Rose to a giant's strength, and always cried—
You shall not find the truth here, she is gone ;
What glimpse men had, was ages since, and these
Go idly babbling on—

Jangles of opposite creeds, alike untrue,
Quaint puzzles, meaningless logomachies,
Efforts to pierce the infinite core of things
 With purblind finite eyes.

Go, get you gone to Nature, she is kind
To reasonable worship ; she alone
Thinks scorn, when humble seekers ask for bread,
 To offer them a stone.

* * * *

And Nature drew me to her, and awhile
Enchained me. Day by day, things strange and new
Rose on me ; day by day, I seemed to tread
 Fresh footsteps of the true.

I laid life's house bare to its inmost room
With lens and scalpel, marked the simple cell
Which might one day be man or creeping worm,
 For aught that sense could tell,—

Thrust life to its utmost home, a speck of gray
No more nor higher, traced the wondrous plan,
The infinite wise appliances which shape
 The dwelling-place of man,—

Nor halted here, but thirsted still to know,
And, with half-blinded eyesight, loved to pore
On that scarce visible world, born of decay
 Or stranded on the shore.

Marked how the Mother works with earth and gas,
And with what subtle alchemy knows to blend
The vast conflicting forces of the world
To one harmonious end ;

And, nightly gazing on the splendid stars,
Essayed in vain with reverent eye to trace
The chain of miracles by which men learnt
The mysteries of space ;

And toiled awhile with spade and hammer, to learn -
The long long sequences of life, and those
Unnumbered cycles of forgotten years
Ere life's faint light arose ;

And loved to trace the strange sweet life of flowers,
And all the scarce suspected links which span
The gulf betwixt the fungus and the tree,
And 'twixt the tree and man.

Then suddenly, "What is it that I know ?
I know the shows and changes, not the cause ;
I know but long successions, which usurp
The name and rank of laws.

"And what if the design I think I see
Be but a pitiless order, through the long
Slow wear of chance and suffering working out
Salvation for the strong ?

“How else, if scheme there be, can I explain
The cripple or the blind, the ravening jaw,
The infinite waste of life, the plague, the sword,
The evil, thriftless law,

“Or seeming errors of design, or strange
Complexities of structure, which suggest
A will which sported with its power, or worked
Not careful for the best?”

I could not know the scheme, nor therefore spend
My soul in painful efforts to conform
With those who lavished life and brain to trace
The story of a worm ;

Nor yet with those who, prizing overmuch
The unmeaning jargon of their science, sought
To hide, by arrogance, from God and man
Their poverty of thought,

And, blind with fact and stupefied by law,
Lost sight of the Creator, and became
Dull bigots, narrowed to a hopeless creed,
And priests in all but name.

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Thus, tired with seeking truth, and not content
To dwell with those weak souls who love to feign
Unending problems of the life and love
Which they can ne'er explain ;

Nor those who, parrot-like, are proud to clothe
In twenty tongues the nothing that they know ;
Nor those whom barren lines and numbers blind
To all things else below ;

And half-suspecting, when the poet sang
And drew my soul to his, and round me cast
Fine cords of fancy, but a sleight of words,
Part stolen from the past—

I thought, My life lies not with books, but men !
Surely the nobler part is his who guides
The State's great ship through hidden rocks and sands,
Rude winds and popular tides,—

A freeman amongst freemen,—and contrives,
By years of thought and labour, to withdraw
Some portion of their load from lives bent down
By old abusive law !

A noble task ; but how to walk with those
Who ever by fate's subtle irony hold
The freeman's ear—the cunning fluent knave,
The dullard big with gold ?

And how, where worthier souls bore rule, to set
The Faction higher than Truth, or stoop to cheat,
With cozening words and shallow flatteries
The Solons of the street ?

Or, failing this, to wear a hireling sword—
Ready, whate'er the cause, to kill and slay,
And float meanwhile, a gilded butterfly,
My brief inglorious day—

Or, in the name of Justice, to confuse,
For hire, with shameless tongue and subtle brain,
Dark riddles, which, to honest minds unwarped,
Are easy to explain—

Or, with keen salutary knife, to carve
For hire the shrinking limb ; or else to feign
Wise words and healing powers, though knowing naught
In face of death and pain—

Or grub all day for pelf 'mid hides and oils,
Like a mole in some dark alley, to rise at last,
After dull years, to wealth and ease, when all
The use for them is past—

Or else to range myself with those who seek
By reckless throws with chance, by trick and cheat,
Swift riches lacking all the zest of toil,
And only bitter-sweet.

Or worst, and still for hire, to feign to hear
A voice which called not, calling me to tell
Now of an indolent heaven, and now, obscene
Threats of a bodily hell.

Then left I all, and ate the husks of sense ;
Oh, passionate coral lips ! oh, shameful fair !
Bright eyes, and careless smiles, and rounded forms !
Oh, golden rippling hair !

Oh, rose-strewed feasts, made glad with wine and song
And laughter-lit ! oh, whirling dances sweet,
When the mad music faints awhile and leaves
Low beats of rhythmic feet !

Oh, glorious terrible moments, when the sheen
Of silk, and straining limbs flash thundering by,
And name and fame and honour itself, await
Worse hazard than the die !

All these were mine. Then, thought I, I have found
The truth at last ; here comes not doubt to pain ;
Here things are what they seem, not figments, born
Of a too busy brain.

But soon, the broken law avenged itself ;
For, oh, the pity of it ! to feel the fire
Grow colder daily, and the soaring soul
Sunk deep in grosser mire.

And oh, the pity of it ! to drag down lives
Which had been happy else, to ruin, and waste
The precious affluence of love, which else
Some humble home had graced.

And oh ! the weariness of feasts and wine ;
The jests where mirth was not, the nerves unstrung,
The throbbing brain, the tasteless joys, which keep
Their savour for the young.

These came upon me, and a vague unrest,
And then a gnawing pain ; and then I fled,
As one some great destruction passes, flees
The city of the dead.

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Then, pierced by some vague sense of guilt and pain ;
“ God help me ! ” I said. “ There is no help in life,
Only continual passions waging war,
Cold doubt and endless strife ! ”

But He is full of peace, and truth, and rest,
I give myself to Him ; I strive to find
What words divine have fallen from age to age
Fresh from the Eternal mind.

And so, upon the reverend page I dwelt,
Which shows Him formless, self-contained, all-wise,
Passionless, pure, the soul of visible things,
Unseen by mortal eyes ;

Who oft across dim gulfs of time revealed,
Grew manifest, then passed and left a foul
Thick mist of sense and error to obscure
The upward gazing soul ;

And those which told of Opposite Principles,
Of Light with Darkness warring evermore ;
Ah me ! 'twas nothing new, I had felt the fight
 Within my soul before.

And those wise answers of the far-off sage,
So wise, they shut out God, and can enchain
To-day in narrow bonds of foolishness
 The subtle Eastern brain.

And last, the hallowed pages dear to all,
Which bring God down to earth, a King to fight
With His people's hosts ; or speaking awful words
 From out the blaze of light,—

Which tell how earthly chiefs who loved the right,
Were dear to Him ; and how the poet king
Sang, from his full repentant heart, the strains
 Sad hearts still love to sing.

And how the seer was filled with words of fire,
And passionate scorn and lofty hate of Ill
So pure, that we who hear them seem to hear
 God speaking to us still,

But mixed with these, dark tales of fraud and blood,
Like weeds in some fair garden ; till I said,
“ These are not His ; how shall a man discern
 The living from the dead ?

“ I will go to that fair Life, the flower of lives ;
I will prove the infinite pity and love which shine
From each recorded word of Him who once
Was human, yet Divine.

“ Oh, pure sweet life, crowned by a godlike death ;
Oh tender healing hand ; oh words that give
Rest to the weary, solace to the sad,
And bid the hopeless live !

“ Oh pity, spurning not the penitent thief ;
Oh wisdom, stooping to the little child ;
Oh infinite purity, taking thought for lives
By sinful stains defiled !

“ With thee, will I dwell, with thee.” But as I mused,
Those pale ascetic words renewed my doubt :
The cheek, which to the smiter should be turned,
The offending eye plucked out.

The sweet impossible counsels which may seem
Too careless of the state ; nor recognise
A duty to the world, not all reserved
For that beyond the skies.

“ And was it truth, or some too reverent dream
Which scorned God’s precious processes of birth,
And spurned aside for Him, the changeless laws
Which rule all things of earth ?

“ Or how shall some strange breach of natural law
Be proof of moral truth ; yet how deny
That He who holds the cords of life and death
Can raise up those who die ?

“ Yet how to doubt that God may be revealed ;
Is He more strange, incarnate, shedding tears,
Than when the unaided scheme fulfils itself
Through countless painful years ?

“ But if revealed He be, how to escape
The critic who dissects the sacred page,
Till God’s gift hangs on grammar, and the saint
Is weaker than the sage ! ”

These warring thoughts held me, and more ; but when
The simple life divine shone forth no more,
And the fair truth came veiled in stately robes
Of philosophic lore ;

And ’twas the apostle spoke, and not the Christ ;
The scholar, not the Master ; and the Church
Defined itself, and sank to earthly thrones :
“ Surely,” I said, “ my search

“ Is vain ; ” and when with magical rite and spell
They killed the Lord, and sought with narrow creed
Half-fancy, half of barbarous logic born,
To heal the hearts that bleed ;

And heretic strove with heretic, and the Church
Slew for the truth itself had made : again,
“Can these things be of Him?” I thought, and felt
The old undying pain.

And yet the fierce false prophet turned to God
The gross idolatrous East ; and far away,
Beyond the horrible wastes, the lewd knave makes
A^o Páradise to-day.

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Yet still deep down, within my being I kept
Two sacred fires alight through all the strife,—
Faith in a living God ; faith in a soul
Dowered with an endless life.

And therefore though the world's foundations shook,
I was not all unhappy ; knowing well
That He whose hand sustained me would not bear
To leave my soul in hell.

But now I looked on nature with strange eyes,
For something whispered, “Surely all things pass ;
All life decays on earth or air or sea,—
All wither like the grass.”

“These are, then have been, we ourselves decline,
And cease and turn to earth, and are as they :
Shall our dear animals rise ; shall the dead flowers
Bloom in another May ?

“ The seed springs like the herb, but not the same ;
And like us, not the same, our children rise ;
The type survives, though suffering gradual change,
The individual dies.

“ How shall one seek to sever, e’en in thought,
Body and soul ; how show to doubting eyes
That this returns to dust, while the other soars
Deathless beyond the skies ?

• “ And if it be a lovely dream—no more,
And life is ended with our latest breath,
May not the same sweet fancy have devised
The Lord of life and death ?

“ We know Him not ; we may not even conceive
Beginning or yet ending. Is it more
To image an Eternal World, than one
Where nothing was before ?

“ Whence came the Maker ? Was He uncreate ?
Then why must all things else created be ?
Was He created ? Then, the Lord I serve,
Lies farther off than He.

“ Or if He be indeed, yet the soul dies.
Why, what is He to us ? not here, not here !
His judgments fall, wrong triumphs here—right sinks ;
What hope have we, or fear ? ”

I could not answer, yet when others came,
Affirming He was not, and bade me live
In the present only, seizing unconcerned
What pleasures life could give,

My doubt grown fiercer, scoffed at them, "Oh fools,
And blind, your joys I know; the universe
Confutes you; can you see right yield to might,
The better to the worse,—

"Nor burn to adjust them? If it were a dream,
Would all men dream it? Can your thoughts conceive
The end you tell of better than the life.
Which all men else believe?

"Or if we shrink as from a hateful voice,
From mute analogies of frame and shape,
Surely no other than a breath Divine
Gave reason to the ape."

"What made all men to call on God? what taught
The soaring soul its lofty heavenward flight?
What led us to discern the strait bounds set,
To sever wrong from right?

"Be sure, no easier is it to declare
He is not than He is:" and I who sought
Firm ground, saw here the same too credulous faith
And impotence of thought.

And when they brought me their fantastic creed,
With a figment for a god—mock ceremonies—
Man worshipping himself—mock priests to kill
The soul's high liberties,—

I spurned the folly with a curse, and turned
To dwell with my own soul apart, and there
Found no companion but the old doubt grown
To an immense despair.

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Then, as a man who, on a sunny day,
Feeling some trifling ache; unknown before,
Goes careless from his happy home, and seeks
A wise physician's door.

And when he comes forth, neither heeds nor sees
The joyous tide of life or smiling sky,
But always, always hears a ceaseless voice
Repeating "Thou shalt die."

So all the world flowed by, and all my days
Passed like an empty vision, and I said,
"There is no help in life ; seeming to live,
We are but as the dead."

And thus, I tossed about long time ; at last
Nature rebelled beneath the constant pain,
And the dull sleepless care forgot itself,
In frenzy of the brain.

And sometimes all was blackness, unrelieved,
And sometimes I would wander day and night,
Through fiery long arcades, which seared my brain
With flakes of blinding light.

And then I lay unmoved in a gray calm ;
Not life nor death, and the past came to seem
Thought, act, faith, doubt, things of but little worth
A dream within a dream.

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- But, when I saw my country like a cloud,
Sink in the East, and the free ocean wind
Fanned life's returning flame and roused again
Slow pulse and languid mind ;

Soon the great rush and mystery of the sea,
The grisly depths, the great waves surging on,
Dark with white spuming crests which threaten death,
Swoop by, and so are gone.

And the strong sense of weakness, as we sped—
Tossed high, plunged low, through many a furious night,
And slept in faith, that some poor seaman woke
To guide our course aright.

All lightened something of my load, and seemed
To solace me a little, for they taught,
That the impalpable unknown might stretch,
Even to the realms of thought.

And so I wandered into many lands,
And over many seas ; I felt the chill
Which in mid-ocean strikes on those who near
The spire-crowned icy hill,

And threaded fairy straits beneath the palms,
Where, year by year, the tepid waters sleep ;
And where, round coral isles, the sudden sea
Sinks its unfathomed deep.

Upon the savage feverish swamp, I trod
The desert sands, the fat low plains of the East ;
On glorious storied shores and those where man
Was ever as the beast.

And, day by day, I felt my frozen scul,
Soothed by the healing influence of change,
Grow softer, registering day by day,
Things new, unknown, and strange.

Not therefore, holding what it spurned before,
Nor solving riddles, which before perplexed ;
But with new springs of sympathy, no more
By impotent musings vexed.

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And last of all I knew the lovely land
Which was most mighty, and is still most fair ;
Where world-wide rule and heavenward faith have left
Their traces everywhere.

And as from province to province I wandered on,
City or country, all was fair and sweet ;
The air, the fields, the vines, the dark-eyed girls,
The dim arcaded street ;

The minsters lit for vespers, in the cool ;
Gay bridals, solemn burials, soaring chant,
Spent in high naves, gray cross, and wayside shrine,
And kneeling suppliant ;

And painting, strong to aid the eye of faith,
And sculpture, figuring awful destinies ;
Tall campaniles, crowning lake-lit hills,
And sea-worn palaces.

Then, as the sweet days passed me one by one,
New tides of life through body and soul were sent ;
And daily sights of beauty worked a calm
Ineffable content.

And soon, as in the spring, ere frosts are done,
Deep down in earth the black roots quicken and start,
I seemed to feel a spring of faith and love
Stir through my frozen heart.

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Till one still summer eve, when as I mused
By a fair lake, from many a silvery bell,
Thrilled from thin towers, I heard the Angelus,
Deep peace upon me fell.

And following distant organ-swells, I passed
Within the circuit of a lofty wall,
And thence within dim aisles, wherein I heard
The low chant rise and fall.

And dark forms knelt upon the ground, and all
Was gloom, save where some dying day-beam shone,
High in the roof, or where the votive lamp
Burned ever dimly on.

Then whether some chance sound or solemn word
Across my soul a precious influence cast,
Or whether the fair presence of a faith
Born of so great a past,

Smote on me—lo ! the wintry days were gone,
And once again the spring-time, and once more
Faith from its roots bloomed heavenward—and I sank
Weeping upon the floor.

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Long time within that peaceful home I dwelt
With those grave brethren, spending silent days
And watchful nights, in solemn reverent thought,
Made glad by frequent praise.

And the awakened longing for the Truth,
With the great dread of what had been before,
The ordered life, the nearer view of heaven,
Worked on me more and more.

So that, I lived their life of prayer and praise,
Alike in summer heats and wintry snows,
Pacing chill cloisters 'neath the waning stars,
 Long ere the slow sun rose.

And speaking little, and bringing down my soul,
With frequent fast and vigil, saw at length
Truth's face show daily clearer and more clear
 To failing bodily strength.

For living in a mystical air, and grown
Athirst for faith and truth ; at last I brought
The old too-active logic to enforce
 The current of my thought.

And wishing to believe, I took for true
The shameless subtleties which dare to tell
How the Eternal charged one hand to hold
 The keys of heaven and hell.

“For if a faith be given, then must there be
A Church to guard it, and a tongue to speak,
And an unerring mind to rule alike
 The strong souls and the weak.”

“And, because God's high purpose stands not still,
But He is ever with His own, the tide
Of miracle and dogma ceases not,
 But flows down strong and wide,

“To the world’s ending.” So my mind fell prone,
Before the Church ; and teachings new and strange ;
The wafer, which they turned into their God,
By some incredible change—

The substance which is changed, and yet retains
The self-same accidents ; the Virgin Queen,
Immaculate in birth, and without death,
Soaring to worlds unseen—

The legends, always foolish, sometimes fair,
Of saints who set all natural laws at naught ;
The miracles, the portents, not the charm,
Of the old Pagan thought—

These shook me not at all, who only longed
To drain the healing draught of faith again,
And dreaded, with a coward’s dread, the thought
Of the old former pain.

The more incredible the tale, the more
The merit of belief ; the more I sought
To reason out the truth, I knew the more
The impotence of thought.

And thus the swift months passed in prayer and praise,
Bringing the day when those tall gates should close,
And shut me out from thought and life and all
Our heritage of woes.

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Then, one day, when the end drew very near,
Which should blot out the past for ever, and I
Waited impatient, longing for the hour
 When my old self should die ;

I knelt at noon, within the darkened aisles,
Before a doll tawdry with rich brocade,
And all ablaze with gems, the precious gifts
 Which pious hands had made :

Nor aught of strange I saw, so changed was I,
In that dull fetish ; nay, heaven's gate unsealed,
And the veiled angels bent before the throne,
 Where sat their Lord revealed.

While like a flood the ecstasy of faith
Surged high and higher, only to fall at last
Lower and lower, when the rapture failed
 And faded, and was past.

Lo, a sweet sunbeam, straying through the gloom
Smote me, as when the first low shaft of day
Aslant the night-clouds shoots, and momentarily
 Chases the mists away.

And that ideal heaven was closed, and all
That reverend house turned to a darkened room,
A den of magic, masking with close fumes
 The odours of the tomb.

Then passed I forth. Again my soul was free ;
Again the summer sun and exquisite air
Made all things smile ; and life and joy and love
Were round me everywhere.

And over all the earth there went a stir,
A movement, a renewal. Round the spring
In the broad village street, the dark-eyed girls
Were fain to dance and sing

For the glad time. The children played their play,
Like us who play at life ; light bursts of song
Came from the fields, and to the village church
A bridal passed along.

Far on the endless plain, the swift steam drew
A soft white riband. Down the lazy flow
Of the broad stream, I marked, round sylvan bends,
The seaward barges go.

The brown vine-dresser, bent among his vines,
Ceased sometimes from his toil to hold on high
His laughing child, while his deep-bosomed wife
Cheerful sat watching by.

And all the world was glad, and full of life,
And I grew glad with it, and quickly came
To see my past life as it was, and feel
A salutary shame.

For what was it I had wished? To set aside
The perfect scheme of things, to live apart
A sterile life, divorced from light and love,
Sole, with an empty heart.

And wherefore to fatigue the Eternal ear
With those incessant hymns of barren praise?
Does not a sweeter sound go up to Him
From well-spent toilsome days,—

And natural life, refined by honest love,
And sweet unselfish liturgies of home,
The scheme of being, worked out by duteous souls,
Careless of what may come?

What need has He for praise? The flowers, the woods,
The winds, the seas, the plains, the mountains, praise
Their Maker, with a grander litany
Than our poor voices raise.

What need has He of them? And looking back
To those gray walls which late had shown so fair,
I felt as one who from a dungeon 'scapes
To free unfettered air.

And half distrustful of myself, and full
Of terror of what might be, once more fled,
With scarce a glance behind, as one who flees
The city of the dead.

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All through that day and night I journeyed on
To the northward. With the dawn a tender rose
Blushed in mid-heaven, and looking up, I saw
Far off, the eternal snows.

Then all day higher, higher, from the plain,
Beyond the tinkling folds, beyond the fair
Dense, self-sown chestnuts, then the scented pines,
And then an eager air,

And then the ice-fields and the cloudless heavens ;
And ever as I climbed, I seemed to cast
My former self behind, and all the rags
Of that unlovely past :

The doubts, the superstitions, the regrets,
The awakening ; as the soul which hears the loud
Archangel summon, rising, casts behind
Corruption and the shroud.

For I was come into a higher land,
And breathed a purer air than in the past ;
And He who brought me to the dust of death
. Had holpen me at last.

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What then ? A dream of sojourn 'mid the hills,
A stir of homeward travel, swift and brief,
Because the very hurry of the change
Brought somewhat of relief.

A dream of a fair city, the chosen seat
Of all the pleasures, impotent to stay
The thirsty soul, whose water-springs were laid
In dear lands far away.

A dream of the old crowds, the smoke, the din
Of our dear mother, dearer far than fair ;
The home of lofty souls and busy brains,
Keener for that thick air.

Then a long interval of patient toil,
Building the gradual framework of my art,
With eyes which cared no more to seek the whole,
Fast fixed upon the part.

And mind, which shunned the general, absorbed
In the particular only, till it saw
What boundless possibilities lie between
The matter and the law !

How that which may be rules, not that which must ;
And absolute truth revealed, would serve to blind
The soul's bright eye, and sear with tongues of flame
The sinews of the mind.

How in the web of life, the thread of truth
Is woven with error ; yet a vesture fair
Comes from the loom—a precious royal robe
Fit for a god to wear.

Till at the last, upon the crest of toil
Sat Knowledge, and I gained a newer truth :
Not the pale queen of old, but a soft maid,
Filled with a tender ruth.

And, ray by ray, the clear-faced unity
Orbed itself forth, and lo ! the noble throng
Of patient souls, who sought the truth in act,
And grew, through silence, strong.

Till prizing union more than dissidence,
And holding dear the race, I came to prove
A spring of sympathy within, which swelled
To a deep stream of love.

And Knowledge gave me gold, and power, and fame,
And honour ; and Love, a clearer, surer view :
Thus in calm depths I moored my weary soul
Fast anchored to the True.

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And now the past lies far away, and I
Can scarce recall those vanished days again ;
No more the old faith stirs me, and no more
Comes the old barren pain.

For now each day brings its appointed toil,
And every hour its grateful sum of care ;
And life grows sweeter, and the gracious world
Shows day by day more fair.

For now I live a two-fold life ; my own
And yet another's ; and another heart
Which beats to mine, makes glad the lonely world
Where once I lived apart.

And little lives are mine to keep unstained,
Strange mystic growths, which day by day expand.
Like the flowers they are, and set me in a fair
Perpetual wonderland.

New senses, gradual language, dawning mind,
And with each day that passes, traced more strong
On those white tablets, awful characters
That tell of right and wrong.

And what hand wrote them ? One brief life declined
Went from us, and is not. Ah ! what and where
Is that fair soul ? Surely it somewhere blooms
In purer, brighter air.

What took it hence, and whither ? Can I bear
To think, that I shall turn to a herb, a tree,
A little earth or lime, nor care for these,
Whatever things may be ?

Or shall the love and pity I feel for these
End here, nor find a higher type or task?
I am as God to them, bestowing more
Than they deserve or ask.

And shall I find no Father? Shall my being
Aspire in vain for ever, and always tend
To an impossible goal, which none shall reach,—
An aim without an end?

Or, shall I heed them when they bid me take
No care for aught but what my brain may prove?
I, through whose inmost depths from birth to death,
Strange heavenward currents move;

Vague whispers, inspirations, memories,
Sanctities, yearnings, secret questionings,
And oft amid the fullest blaze of noon,
The rush of hidden wings?

Nay; my soul spurns it! Less it is to know
Than to have faith: not theirs who cast away
The mind God gave them, eager to adore
Idols of baser clay.

But theirs, who marking out the bounds of mind,
And where thought rules, content to understand,
Know that beyond its kingdom lies a dread
Immeasurable land.

A land which is, though fainter than a cloud,
Full of sweet hopes and awful destinies :
A dim land, rising when the eye is clear
Across the trackless seas.

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O life ! O death ! O faithful wandering soul !
O riddle of being, too hard to understand !
These are Thy dreadful secrets, Lord ; and we
The creatures of Thy hand.

O wells of consciousness, too deep for thought,
These are Thy dwelling, awful Lord Divine ;
Thine are we still, the creatures of Thy hand,
Living and dying, Thine.



THE WEARY RIVER.

THERE is a ceaseless river,
Which flows down evermore
Into a wailing ocean,
A sea without a shore.

Broken by laughing ripple,
Foaming with angry swell,
Sweet music as of heaven,
Deep thunder as of hell.

Gay fleets float down upon it,
And sad wrecks, full of pain :
But all alike it hurries
To that unchanging main.

Sometimes 'tis foul and troubled,
And sometimes clear and pure ;
But still the river flows, and still
The dull sea doth endure.

And thus 'twill flow for ever,
Till time shall cease to be :
O weary, weary river,
O bitter, barren sea.

TRUTH IN FALSEHOOD.

YOUR little hand in mine I rest :

The slender fingers, white and long,
Lie in my broad palm, rude and strong,
Like birdlings in their nest.

Yours, like yourself, so soft and white,

So delicately free from soil ;
Mine sunbrowned, hard with moil and toil,
And seamed with scars of fight.

Dear love ! sometimes your innocence

Strikes me with sudden chills of fear ;
What if you saw before you, dear,
The secret gulfs of sense ?—

The coarseness, the deceit, the sin,

We know, who 'mid the sordid crowd
Must press, nor midst the tumult loud
Can hear the voice within ?

What if you saw me with the eyes

Of others,—nay, my own,—or heard
The unworthy tale, the biting word,
The sneer that worldlings prize ?

Or knew me as I am indeed,
No hero free from blot or stain,
But a poor soul who drags his chain
With halting feet that bleed,—

Who oft-time slips and falls, content,
Though bruised and weary, faint and worn,
He toils all night, if with the morn
When life and strength are spent,

He sees some far-off struggling ray,
Dispel the palpable obscure,
And on the eastern hills, the pure
White footprints of the day?

But you, oh love, can never know
These darkling paths; for you the light
Shines always changeless, always bright,
The self-same tempered glow.

And love with innocence combined
The nunnery of your heart shall guard,
And faith with eye unfailing ward
The jewel of your mind.

So be it : I would sooner be
Steeped to the lips in lie and cheat,
A very monster of deceit,
Than bare myself to thee.

Nay, rather would I dare to hear
At that great day from lips of flame,
Blown to all souls my tale of shame,
Than whispered in thine ear.

Strange riddle, to those who never knew
Of good with evil intertwined
The two-fold self, the links that bind
The false things to the true ;

But to the seeing eye more clear
Than blaze of noonday. So be sure
If my stained life might keep thine pure,
I'd glory in it, dear.



TWO VOYAGES.

Two ships which meet upon the ocean waste,
And stay a little while, and interchange
Tidings from two strange lands, which lie beneath
Each its own heaven and particular stars,

And fain would tarry ; but the impatient surge
Calls, and a cold wind from the setting sun
Divides them, and they sadly drift apart,
And fade, and sink, and vanish, 'neath the verge—

One to the breathless plains and treacherous seas
Smitten by the tyrannous Sun, where mind alone
Withers amid the bounteous outer-world,
And prodigal Nature dwarfs and chains the man—

One to cold rains, rude winds, and hungry waves
Spilt on the frowning granite, niggard suns,
And snows and mists which starve the vine and palm,
But nourish to more glorious growth the man.

One to the scentless flowers and songless birds,
Swift storms and poison stings and ravening jaws :
One to spring violets and nightingales,
Sleek-coated kine and honest gray-eyed skies.

One to lie helpless on the stagnant sea,
Or sink in sleep beneath the hurricane :
One to speed on, white-winged, through summer airs,
Or sow the rocks with ruin—who shall tell ?

So with two souls which meet on life's broad deep,
And cling together but may not stay ; for Time
And Age and chills of Absence wear the links
Which bind them, and they part for evermore—

One to the tropic lands of fame and gold,
And feverish thirst and weariness of soul ;
One to long struggles and a wintry life,
Decked with one sweet white bloom of happy love.

For each, one fate, to live and die apart,
Save for some passing smile of kindred souls ;
Then drift away alone, on opposite tides,
To one dark harbour and invisible goal.



THE WISE RULE.

“ TIME flies too fast, too fast our life decays.”

Ah, faithless ! in the present lies our being ;
And not in lingering love for vanished days !

“ Come, happy future, when my soul shall live.”

Ah, fool ! thy life is now, and not again ;
The future holds not joy nor pain to give !

“ Live for what is : future and past are naught.”

Ah, blind ! a flash, and what shall be, has been.
Where, then, is that for which thou takest thought ?

Not in what has been, is, or is to be,

The wise soul lives, but in a wider time,
Which is not any, but contains the three !

THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING.

Cry, cry aloud in the land, cry aloud in the streets of the city ;

Cry and proclaim that no more shall the blood of the people be shed.

Too long have the great ones waxed strong, without justice or any pity,

Too long have they ground down the poor, and eaten the people as bread.

Thus said the voice from the dead.

Terrible voice, I said, immoderate, voice of unreason,
Not of themselves do the lowly ones mourn, or the great ones rejoice ;

He who hath made them unequal, hath made all things in their season ;

If they are mighty and strong, they were made without freedom, or choice.

Cry, cry aloud, said the voice.

How shall the sins of the few be reckoned against the
many?

Are there no tender hearts and kind 'midst the selfish
and proud;

Merciful souls and pure, full of love for their suffering
brothers;

Pitiful, touched with compassion and care for the
desolate crowd?

Cry, said the voice, cry aloud.

Nay, but the world is ruled by merciless rules unbending ;
The feeble folk fade from the earth, and only the mighty
remain ;

Not men alone, but all things send upwards a clamour
unending ;

Always the whole creation travails in sorrow and pain.

Cry, said the voice, cry again.

Are not our sins and our fathers' worked out in our
children's sorrow?

Does not excess of laughter sink at its close in a sigh?

Mirth and enjoyment to-day turn to pain and repentance
to-morrow ;

Thousands are born every hour, in the place of the
thousands who die.

Cry, said the stubborn voice, cry.

Lo ! He hath made all things ; good and evil, sorrow and pleasure ;

Not as your ways are His ways, yet are ye not all in His hand ?

Just is He, though ye know not the measure wherewith He will measure ;

Dark things shall one day be clear ; to obey is to understand !

Thus that voice, solemn and grand.



OTHER DAYS.

O THRUSH, your song is passing sweet,
But never a song that you have sung
Is half so sweet as thrushes sang
When my dear love and I were young.

O Roses, you are sweet and red,
Yet not so red nor sweet as were
The roses that my mistress loved
To bind within her flowing hair.

Time filches fragrance from the flower ;
Time steals the sweetness from the song ;
Love only scorns the tyrant's power,
And with the growing years grows strong.

THE TRUE MAN.

TAKE thou no thought for aught save right and truth,
Life holds for finer souls no equal prize ;
Honours and wealth are baubles to the wise,
And pleasure flies on swifter wing than youth.
If in thy heart thou bearest seeds of hell,
Though all men smile, yet what shall be thy gain ?
Though all men frown, if truth and right remain,
Take thou no thought for aught ; for it is well.

Take thou no thought for aught ; nor deem it shame
To lag behind while knaves and dullards rise ;
Thy soul asks higher guerdon, purer fame,
Than to loom large and grand in vulgar eyes.
Though thou shouldst live thy life in vile estate,
Silent, yet knowing that deep within thy breast
Unkindled sparks of genius lie repressed,—
Greater is he who is, than seemeth, great.

If thou shouldst spend long years of hope deferred,
Chilled through with doubt, and sickening to despair ;
If as cares thicken friends grow cold and rare,
Nor favouring voice in all the throng be heard ;
If all men praise him whom thou know'st to be
Of lower aims and duller brain than thine,—
Take thou no thought, though all men else combine
In thy despite : their praise is naught to thee.

Bethink thee of the irony of fate,
How great men die inglorious and alone ;
How Dives sits within upon his throne,
While good men crouch with Lazarus at the gate.
Our tree of life set on Time's hither shore
Blooms like the secular aloe once an age :
The great names scattered on the historic page
Are few indeed, but the unknown are more.

Waste is the rule of life : the gay flowers spring,
The fat fruits drop, upon the untrodden plain ;
Sea-sands at ebb are silvered o'er with pain ;
The fierce rain beats and mars the feeble wing ;
Fair forms grow fairer still for deep disease ;
Hearts made to bless are spent apart, alone.
What claim hast thou to joy, while others moan ?
God made us all, and art thou more than these ?

Take thou no care for aught save truth and right ;
Content, if such thy fate, to die obscure ;
Wealth palls and honours, Fame may not endure,
And loftier souls soon weary of delight.
Keep innocence ; be all a true man ought ;
Let neither pleasure tempt, nor pains appal :
Who hath this, he hath all things, having naught ;
Who hath it not, hath nothing, having all.



PASSING.

To spring, to bloom, to fade,—
This is the sum of the laborious years ;
Life preludes death as laughter ends in tears :
All things that God has made
Suffer perpetual change, and may not long endure.

We alter day by day ;
Each little moment, as life's current rolls,
Stamps some faint impress on our yielding souls ;
We may not rest nor stay,
Drifting on tides unseen to one dread goal and sure.

Our being is compassed round
With miracles ; on this our life-long sleep,
Strange whispers rise from the surrounding deep,
Like that weird ocean sound
Borne in still summer nights on weary watching ears.

The selves we leave behind
Affright us like the ghosts of friends long dead ;
The old love vanished in the present dread,
They visit us to find
New sorrows, alien hopes, strange pleasures, other fears.

FETTERS.

OH who shall say that we are free !
Surely life's chains are strong to bind
From youth to age, from birth to death,
Body and mind.

We run the riotous race of youth,
Then turn from evil things to good :
'Tis but a slower pulse, a chill
Of youth's hot blood.

We mount the difficult steep of thought,
Or pace the dusty paths of gain :
'Tis but that sense receding leaves
A keener brain.

Time takes this too, and then we turn
Our dim eyes to the hidden shore ;
Life palls, and yet we long to live,—
Ay, nothing more.

RICH AND WISE.

WILD flowers in spring were sweet to childish hands
As riches to the wretch possessing naught ;
And as the water-springs in desert lands
Are the pale victories of patient thought :
But sweeter, dearest, sweeter far,
The hours when we together are.

No more I know the childish joys of old,
Nor yet have learnt the grave delights of age :
A miser, gloat I on thy locks' rich gold ;
A student, ponder on thy soul's fair page.
Thus do I grow both rich and wise,
On these fair locks and those deep eyes.

Therefore in wit and wealth do I increase,
Poring on thee, as on a fair writ book ;
No panic-fear can make that rich stream cease,
Nor doubt confuse the crystal of thy look.
Some to the mart some to the oratory
May turn them : thou art both to me.

LOVE IN DEATH.

DEAR heart ! what a little time it is since Francis and I
used to walk
From church in the still June evenings together, busy
with loving talk ;
And now he is gone, far away over seas, to some strange
foreign country,—and I
Shall never rise from my bed any more, till the day when
I come to die.

I tried not to think of him during the prayers ; but when
his dear voice I heard,
I failed to take part in the hymn ; for my heart fluttered
up to my throat like a bird,
And scarcely a word of the sermon I caught. I doubt
'twas a grievous sin ;
But 'twas only one poor little hour in the week that I
had to be happy in.

When the blessing was given, and we left the dim aisles
for the light of the evening star ;
Though I durst not lift up my eyes from the ground, yet
I knew that he was not far.
And I hurried on, though I fain would have stayed, till I
heard his footstep draw near ;
And love rising up in my breast like a flame, cast out
every shadow of fear.

Ah me ! 'twas a pleasant pathway home,—a pleasant
pathway and sweet ;
Ankle deep through the purple clover ; breast high 'mid
the blossoming wheat ;
I can hear the landrails prate through the dew, and the
night-jars' tremulous thrill,
And the nightingale pouring her passionate song from
the hawthorn under the hill.

One day, when we came to the wicket gate, 'neath the
elms, where we used to part,
His voice began to falter and break as he told me I had
his heart.
And I whispered back that mine was his : we knew what
we felt long ago ;
Six weeks are as long as a lifetime almost, when you love
each other so.

So we put up the banns, and were man and wife, in the
sweet fading time of the year,
And till Christmas was over and past, I knew no shadow
of sorrow or fear.
It seems like a dream already, alas ! a sweet dream
vanished and gone,
So hurried and brief while passing away, so long to look
back upon.

I had only had him three little months, and the world
lay frozen and dead,
When the summons came, which we feared and hoped,
and he sailed over seas for our bread.
Ah, well ! it is fine to be wealthy and grand, and never
to need to part ;
But 'tis better far to love and be poor than be rich with
an empty heart.

Though I thought 'twould have killed me to lose, him at
first, yet was he not going for me ?
So I hid deep down in my breast all the grief, which I
knew it would pain him to see.
He'd surely be back by the autumn, he said ; and since
his last passionate kiss
He has scarcely been out of my thoughts, day or night,
for a moment, from that day to this.

When I wrote to him how I thought it would be, and he
answered so full of love,

Ah! there was not an angel happier than I, in all the
white chorus above.

And I seemed to be lonely no longer, the days and the
weeks passed so swiftly away ;

And the March winds died, and the sweet April showers
gave place to the blossoms of May.

And then came the sad summer-eve, when I sat with the
little frock in the sun,

And Patience ran in with the news of the ship—Ah, well!
may His will be done.

They said that all hands were lost, and I swooned away
on the floor like a stone ;

And another life came, ere I knew he was safe, and my
own was over and gone.

* * * * *

And now I lie helpless here, and shall never rise up
again ;

I grow weaker and weaker, day by day, till my weakness
itself is a pain.

Every morning the slow dawn creeps ; every evening I see
from my bed

The orange-gold fade into lifeless gray, and the old even-
ing star overhead.

Sometimes by the twilight dim, or the awful birth of the
day,
As I lie, very still, not asleep nor awake, my soul seems
to flutter away ;
And I float far beyond the stars, till I thrill with a
rapturous pain,
And the feeble touch of a tiny hand recalls me to life
again.

And the doctor says she will live. Ah ! 'tis hard to leave
her alone,
And to think she will never know, in the world, the love
of the mother who's gone.
They will tell her of me, by-and-by, and perhaps she will
shed me a tear ;
But if I should stoop to her bed in the night, she would
start with a horrible fear.

She will grow into girlhood, I trust, and will bask in the
light of love,
And I, if I gain to see her at all, shall only look on from
above.
I shall see her and cannot aid, though she fall into evil
and woe.
Ah, how can the angels find heart to rejoice, when they
think of their dear ones below ?

And Francis, he too will forget me, and go on the journey
of life ;

And I hope, though I dare not think of it yet, will take
him another wife—

It will hardly be Patience, I think, though she liked him
in days gone by.

Was that why she came? But what thoughts are these
for one who is soon to die?

I hope he will come ere I go, though I feel no longer the
thirst

For the sound of his voice and the light of his eye, which
I used to feel at first.

'Tis not that I care for him less, but death dries, with a
finger of fire,

The tender springs of innocent love and the torrents of
strong desire.

And I know we shall meet again. I have done many
things that are wrong,

But surely the Lord of Life and of Love cannot bear to
be angry long.

I am only a girl of eighteen, and have had no teacher
but love ;

And, it may be, the sorrow and pain I have known will
be counted for me above.

For I doubt if the minister knows all the depths of the
goodness of God,
When he says, He is jealous of earthly love, and bids me
bow down 'neath the rod.
He is learnèd and wise, I know, but somehow to dying
eyes
God opens the secret doors of the shrine that are closed
to the learnèd and wise.

So now I am ready to go, for I know He will do what is
best,
Though He call me away while the sun is on high, like
a child sent early to rest.
I should like him to see her first, though the yearning is
over and past :
But what is that footstep upon the stair? Oh, my
darling at last, at last !

DEAR LITTLE HAND.

DEAR little hand that clasps my own,
 Embrowned with toil and seamed with strife;
Pink little fingers not yet grown
 To the poor strength of after-life,—
 Dear little hand !

Dear little eyes which smile on mine
 With the first peep of morning light;
Now April-wet with tears, or fine
 With dews of pity, or laughing bright.
 Dear little eyes !

Dear little voice, whose broken speech
 All eloquent utterance can transcend;
Sweet childish wisdom strong to reach
 A holier deep than love or friend:
 Dear little voice !

Dear little life ! my care to keep
 From every spot and stain of sin;
Sweet soul foredoomed, for joy or pain,
 To struggle and—which? to fail or win?
 Dread mystical life !

STILL WATERS.

A CRUEL little stream I know,
Which slowly, slowly crawls between
The ooze banks, fringed with sedges green,
That serve to bind its feeble flow.

So sheltered that no passing breath
Of west-wind stirs it ; nay, the blast
Which strips the tall elms and is past,
Scarce wakes to life its face of death.

On its black surface year by year
The marsh flowers, grown untimely old,
Shed their soft petals like a tear,
And hopeless drown their faded gold.

Deep in its darkling depths the pike
Darts with his cruel jaws ; by night
The black eels, sinuous, serpent-like,
Twist like fell ghosts that fear the light.

Spring shuns it, summer loves it not ;
The low fat fields are lit with bloom,
But here the watery sedges rot,
And all the months are clothed with gloom.

Autumn's first footstep sears to brown
Its coarse green fringe ; the first cold breath,
Ere yet the oak-leaf flutters down,
Binds its dull life in icy death.

I hate, I hate you, crawling stream !
Dumb, creeping, murderous wretch, I long
To see the sunlit ripples gleam,
To hear the torrent's jubilant song.

But you, dull monster, all the years
Lie rolling on your sullen flood,
And take your fill of mortal tears ;
Yet, like the Churchmen, spill not blood.

The dark gap in the ice, the boat
Keel upward, or the drifting oar ;
Or, like of old, the little coat,
The white clothes heaped upon the shore :

And some young life is over and gone,
And some fond heart is broken in twain ;
And you flow smoothly, smoothly on,
Taking no heed for death or pain.

They come and grapple with hooks until
They reach the slimy deep, where lies
The white thing, very cold and still,
With death's gaze in its stony eyes.

And you just make a ripple, and then
Flow smoothly onward : you who slew
Young innocent lives of painted men,
Long ere the crowded city grew ;

And shall in far years yet to be,
Pierce unborn mothers with that sharp pain,
Which only a mother feels when he
Who was her first-born comes again,

A clay-cold heap. I would that I
Had but the archangel's flaming brand ;
So would I burn thy dull springs dry, .
And choke thy flow with hills of sand.

Yet why? Whatever soft souls prate,
Babbling of universal good,
Love is the sister-child of hate,
And all good things are bought with blood.

Virtue were not if vice were not,
Nor darkness if there were not light.
Creep on ; fulfil thy murderous lot ;
For wrong has equal life with right.

IN REGENT STREET.

ONE of the nightly hundreds who pass
Wearily, hopelessly, under the gas.

But the old sad words had a strange new tone,
And the wild laugh seemed to sink to a moan.

So that turning as one constrained to look,
The strange sight stifled the voice of rebuke :

For I looked on a girl's face pure and fair,
Blue-eyed, and crowned with a glory of hair,

Such as my dead child-sister might own,
Were she not a child still, but a woman grown ;

Full of the tender graces that come
To the cherished light of an ancient home ;

Even to that touch of a high disdain,
Which is born of a name without blot or stain.

Strange ; as if one should chance to meet
An angel of light in that sordid street !

“O child, what misery brings you here,
To this place of vileness and weeping and fear ?”

“I am no more than the rest,” she said,
Proudly averting her beautiful head !

Then no response, till some kinder word
Stole in unawares, and her heart was stirred.

“I was a wife but the other day,
Now I am left without hope or stay !

“Work did I ask? What work is for you?
What work can those delicate fingers do?

“Service? But how could I bear to part
From the child with whom I had left my heart?

“Alms?—Yes, at first ; then a pitiless No :
The State would provide me whither to go.

“But in sordid prisons it laid my head
With the thief and the harlot ; therefore I fled.

“One thing alone had I left untried,
Then I put off the last rag of pride.”

“What came? ‘You were of an honoured race,
Now you must live with your own disgrace.’

“But many will buy where few will give,
And I die every day that my child may live.”

Motherly love sunk to this! Ah, well,
Teach they not how He went down into hell:

Only blind me in heart and brain,
Or ever I look on the like again.

FROM THE DESERT.

THOU hast visited me with Thy storms,
And the vials of Thy sore displeasure
Thou hast poured on my head, like a bitter draught
Poured forth without stint or measure ;
Thou hast bruised me as flax is bruised ;
Made me clay in the potter's wheel ;
Thou hast hardened Thy face like steel,
And cast down my soul to the ground ;
Burnt my life in the furnace of fire, like dross,
And left me in prison where souls are bound :
Yet my gain is more than my loss.

What if Thou hadst led my soul
To the pastures where dull souls feed ;
And set my steps in smooth paths, far away
From the feet of those that bleed ;
Penned me in low, fat plains,
Where the air is as still as death,
And Thy great winds are sunk to a breath,

And Thy torrents a crawling stream,
And the thick steam of wealth goes up day and night,
Till Thy sun gives a veiled light,
And heaven shows like a vanished dream !

What if Thou hadst set my feet
With the rich in a gilded room ;
And made me to sit where the scorners sit,
Scoffing at death and doom !
What if I had hardened my heart
With dark counsels line upon line ;
And blunted my soul with meat and wine,
Till my ears had grown deaf to the bitter cry
Of the halt and the weak and the impotent ;
Nor hearkened, lapt in a dull content,
To the groanings of those who die !

My being had waxed dull and dead
With the lusts of a gross desire ;
But now Thou hast purged me thoroughly, and burnt
My shame with a living fire.
So burn me, and purge my will,
Till no vestige of self remain,
And I stand out white without spot or stain.
Then let Thy flaming angel at last
Smite from me all that has been before ;
And sink me, freed from the load of the past,
In Thy dark depths evermore.

DUMB.

ALL men are poets if they might but tell
The dim ineffable changes which the sight
Of natural beauty works on them : the charm
Of those first days of Spring, when life revives
And all the world is bloom : the white-fringed green
Of summer seas swirling around the base
Of overhanging cliffs ; the golden gleam
Seen from some breezy hill, where far and wide
The fields grow ripe for harvest ; or the storm
Smiting the leaden surf, or echoing
On nightly lakes and unsuspected hills,
Revealed in lurid light ; or first perceived,
High in mid-heaven, above the rosy clouds,
The everlasting snows.

And Art can move,
To higher minds, an influence as great
As Nature's self ; when the rapt gazer marks
The stainless mother folding arms divine
Around the Eternal Child, or pitying love

Nailed to the dreadful cross, or the white strength
Of happy heathen gods, or serpent coils
Binding the agonized limbs, till from their pain
Is born a thing of beauty for all time.

And more than Nature, more than Art can move
The awakened soul—heroic soaring deeds ;
When the young champion falls in hopeless fight,
Striking for home ; or when, by truth constrained,
The martyr goes forth cheerful to his fate—
The dungeon, or the torture, or, more hard,
The averted gaze of friends, the loss of love,
The loneliness of soul, which truth too oft
Gives to reward the faith which casts aside
All things for her ; or saintly lives obscure,
Spent in a sweet compassion, till they gain,
Living, some glow of heaven ; or passionate love,
Bathing our poor world in a mystic light,
Seen once, then lost for ever. These can stir
Life to its depths, till silence grows a load
Too hard to bear, and the rapt soul would fain
Speak with strange tongues which startle as they come,
Like the old saints who spake at Pentecost.

But we are dumb, we are dumb, and may not tell
What stirs within us, though the soul may throb
And tremble with its passion, though the heart
Dissolve in weeping : dumb. Nature may spread

Sublimest sights of beauty ; Art inspire
High thoughts and pure of God-like sacrifice ;
Yet no word comes. Heroic daring deeds
Thrill us, yet no word comes ; we are dumb, we are
dumb,

Save that from finer souls at times may rise,
Once in an age, faint inarticulate sounds,
Low halting tones of wonder, such as come
From children looking on the stars, but still
With power to open to the listening ear
The Fair Divine Unknown, and to unseal
Heaven's inner gates before us evermore.

Ah, few and far between ! The earth grows green,
Fair shows Art's glorious work from year to year,
Great deeds and high are done from day to day,
But the voice comes not which has power to wake
The sleeping soul within, and animate
The beauty which informs them, lending speech
To what before was dumb. They come, they go,
Those sweet impressions spent on separate souls,
Like raindrops on the endless ocean-plains,
Lost as they fall. The world rolls on ; lives spring,
Blossom, and fade ; the play of life is played
More vivid than of old, on a wider stage,
With more consummate actors ; yet the dull,
Cold jaws of sullen silence swallow up
The strain, and it is lost. But if we might

Paint all things as they are, find voice to speak
The thoughts now mute within us, let the soul
Trace on its sensitive surface vividly,
As does the sun our features, all the play
Of passion, all the changeful tides of thought,
The mystery, the beauty, the delight,
'The fear, the horror, of our lives,—our being
Would blaze up heavenward in a sudden flame,
Spend itself, and be lost.

Wherefore 'tis well

This narrow boundary that hedges in
The strong and weak alike. Thought could not live,
Nor speech, in that pure æther which girds round
Life's central dwelling-place. Only the dull
And grosser atmosphere of earth it is
Which vibrates to the sweet birds' song, and brings
Heaven to the wondering ear. Only the stress,
The pain, the hope, the longing, the constraint
Of limited faculties circling round and round
The grim circumference, and finding naught
Of outlet to the dread unknown beyond,
Can lend the poet voice. Only the weight,
The dulness of our senses, which makes dumb
And hushes half the finer utterance,
Makes possible the song, and modulates
The too exalted music, that it falls
So soft upon the listening soul, that life,
Not withered by the awful harmony,

Nor drunk with too much sweetness, nor struck blind
By the too vivid presence of the Unknown,
Fulfil its round of duty—elevated,
Not slain by too much splendour—comforted,
Not thunder-smitten—soothed, not laid asleep—
And ever, through the devious maze of being,
Fares in slow narrowing cycles to the end.

FAITH WITHOUT SIGHT.

No angel comes to us to tell
Glad news of our beloved dead ;
Nor at the old familiar board,
They sit among us, 'breaking bread.

Three days we wait before the tomb,
Nay, life-long years ; and yet no more,
For all our passionate tears, we find
The stone rolled backward from the door.

Yet are they risen as He is risen ;
For no eternal loss we grieve.
Blessèd are they who ask no sign,
And, never having seen, believe.

CAGED.

ALAS for fame ! I saw a genius sit,
Draining full bumpers with a trembling hand,
And roll out rhapsodies of folly, lit
By soaring fancies hard to understand.
Lonely he seemed, whom all men should admire ;
And some were there who sneered a covert sneer,
Quenching with logic cold the sacred fire ;
And one who hardly checked a rising tear

Because life's order binds with chains of steel
The struggling individual soul ; because
The fair fine flower of life doth oft conceal
A hidden worm which always frets and gnaws
The inner heart from which all perfumes come,
And round the deep-set core of golden fire
Foul creeping creatures make their constant home—
Black hatred, wild revolt, and gross desire.

What is this bar that Nature loves to place
Before the too aspiring heart and brain,—
Bringing down goodly hopes to deep disgrace,
Keeping high pleasure balanced by low pain,
Pure thoughts by secret failings, subtler joys
With grosser sense or hopeless depths of woe,—
Setting our lives in barren counterpoise,
Which says, Thus far, no further shalt thou go.

Is it that Nature, envious of her own,
Even as the fabled gods of primal years,
Because to too great stature it is grown,
Hates her consummate work, and inly fears
Lest the soul, once enfranchised, soar too high,
Up to some Spiritual place of Souls,
Where the world's feeble echoes faint and die,
And in fine waves a purer æther rolls?

There is no infinite in Nature. All
Is finite, set within a self-made bound.
Thought builds round space itself a brazen wall,
And hates the barren cycle's endless round.
Life grown too perfect is not life at all ;
Some hidden discords sweeten every strain ;
No virtue is, where is no power to fail,
Nor true delight without a touch of pain.

And this it is that limits evermore

The life of man to this its low estate,
And gives the soul's light pinions power to soar
Only a little space toward heaven's gate.

Creatures we are of the earth, and not the sky,
Bound down, constrained, confined ; and yet 'tis
well :

No angel's wings are ours to mount on high,
No chains have power to keep our souls in hell,

And since to realms of thought we may aspire,
Higher than these in which we breathe and are,
And know within the same creative fire
As that which lights and warms the furthest star,
So should our restless spirits grow content
With what is theirs, nor covet to be free ;
Since boundless power is oft most impotent,
And narrow bonds the truest liberty.



TOO MUCH KNOWLEDGE.

Oh, if we had but eyes to see
The glory which around us lies,
To read the secrets of the earth,
And know the splendours of the skies ;

And if we had but ears to hear
The psalm of life which upward rolls
From desert tent and city street,
From every meeting-place of souls ;

And if we had but tongues to tell
The dumb thoughts that shall ne'er be heard,
The inarticulate prayers which rise
From hearts by passionate yearnings stirred,—

Our souls would parch, like Semele's,
When her dread Lord blazed forth confessed.
Ah, sometimes too much knowledge blights,
And ignorance indeed is blest !

ON A FLIGHT OF LADY-BIRDS.

OVER the summer sea,
Floating on delicate wings,
Comes an unnumbered host
Of beautiful fragile things ;
Whence they have come, or what
Blind impulse has forced them here,
What still voice marshalled them out
Over wide seas without fear,
You cannot tell, nor I.

But to-day the air is thick
With these strangers from far away :
On hot piers and drifting ships
The weary travellers stay.
On the sands where to-night they will drown,
On the busy waterside street,
Trampled in myriads down
By the careless wayfarers' feet
The beautiful creatures lie.

Who knows what myriads have sunk
To drown in the oily waves,
Till all our sea-side world shows
Like a graveyard crowded with graves?
Humble creatures and small,
How shall the Will which sways
This enormous unresting ball,
Through endless cycles of days,
Take thought for them or care?

And yet, if the greatest of kings,
With the wisest of sages combined,
Never could both devise—
Strong arm and inventive mind—
So wondrous a shining coat,
Such delicate wings and free,
As have these small creatures which float
Over the breathless sea
On this summer morning so fair.

* * * *

And the life, the wonderful life,
Which not all the wisdom of earth
Can give to the humblest creature that moves
The mystical process of birth—
The nameless principle which doth lurk
Far away beyond atom, or monad, or cell,
And is truly His own most marvellous work—
Was it good to give it, or, given, well
To squander it thus away?

For surely a man might think
So precious a gift and grand—
God's essence in part—should be meted out
With a thrifty and grudging hand.
And hard by, on the yellowing corn,
Myriads of tiny jaws
Are bringing the husbandman's labour to scorn,
And the cankerworm frets and gnaws,
Which was made for these for a prey.

For a prey for these? but, oh!
Who shall read us the riddle of life—
The prodigal waste, which naught can redress
But a cycle of sorrow and strife,
The continual sequence of pain,
The perpetual triumph of wrong,
The whole creation in travail to make
A victory for the strong,
And not with frail insects alone?

For is not the scheme worked out
Among us who are raised so high?
Are there no wasted minds among men—
No hearts that aspire and sigh
For the hopes which the years steal away,
For the labour they love, and its meed of fame,
And feel the bright blade grow rusted within,
Or are born to inherited shame,
And a portion with those that groan?

How are we fettered and caged

Within our dark prison-house here !

We are made to look for a loving plan ;

We find everywhere sorrow and fear.

We look for the triumph of Good ;

And, from all the wide world around,

The lives that are spent cry upward to heaven,

From the slaughter-house of the ground,

Till we feel that Evil is lord.

And yet are we bound to believe,

Because all our nature is so,

In a Ruler touched by an infinite ruth

For all His creatures below.

Bound, though a mocking fiend point,

To the waste, and ruin, and pain—

Bound, though our souls should be bowed in despair—

Bound, though wrong triumph again and again,

And we cannot answer a word.



ON AN OLD MINSTER.

OLD minster, when my years were few,
And life seemed endless to the boy ;
Clear yet and vivid is the joy
With which I gazed and thought on you.

Thin shaft and flower-wrought capital,
High-springing arch, and blazoned pane,
Quaint gurgoyles stretching heads profane,
And stately throne and carven stall.

The long nave lost in vaporous gray,
The mailed recumbent forms which wait,
In mockery of earthly state,
The coming of the dreadful day.

The haunted aisles, the gathering gloom,
By some stray shaft of eve made fair :
The stillness of the mouldering air,
The faded legends of the tomb.

I loved them all. What care had I,—
I, the young heir of all the past,—
That neither youth nor life might last,
That all things living came to die !

The past was spent, the past was done,
The present was my own to hold ;
Far off within a haze of gold
Stretched the fair future, scarce begun.

For me did pious builders rear
Those reverend walls ; for me the song
Of supplication, ages long,
Had gone up daily, year by year.

And thus I loved you ; but to-day
The long past near and nearer shows ;
Less bright, more clear, the future grows,
And all the world is growing gray.

But you scarce bear a deeper trace
Of time upon your solemn brow ;
No sadder, stiller, grayer now,
Than when I loved your reverend face.

And you shall be when I am not ;
And you shall be a thing of joy
To many a frank and careless boy
When I and mine are long forgot .

Grave priests shall here with holy rage,
Whose grandsires are as yet unborn,
Lash, with fierce words of saintly scorn,
The heats of youth, the greed of age.

Proud prelates sit on that high throne,
Whose young forefathers drive the plough ;
While Norman lineage nods below,
In aged tramp or withered crone.

And white-haired traders feign to pray,
Sunk deep in thoughts of gain and gold ;
And sweet flower-faces growing old,
Give place to fresher blooms than they.

With such new shape of creed and rite
As none now living may foretell ;
A faith of love which needs not hell,
A stainless worship, pure and white.

Or, may be, some reverting change
To the old faith of vanished days :
The incensed air, the mystic praise,
The barbarous ritual, quaint and strange.

Who knows ? But they are wrong who say
Man's work is brief and quickly past ;
If you through all these centuries last,
While they who built you pass away.

The wind, the rain, the sand, are slow ;
Man fades before his work ; scant trace
Time's finger findeth to efface
Of him whom seventy years lay low.

The grass grows green awhile, and then
Is as before ; the work he made
Casts on his grave a reverend shade
Through long successive lives of men.

But he ! where is he ? Lo, his name
Has vanished from his wonted place,
Unknown his tongue, his creed, his race ;
Unknown his soaring hopes of fame.

Only the creatures of the brain,—
Just laws, wise precepts, deathless verse ;
These weave a chaplet for the hearse,
And through all change unchanged remain.

These will I love as age creeps on ;
Gray minster, these are ever young ;
These shall be read and loved and sung
When every stone of you is gone.

No hands have built the monument
Which to all ages shall endure ;—
High thoughts and fancies, sweet and pure,
Lives in the quest of goodness spent.

These, though no visible forms confine
Their spiritual essence fair ;
Are deathless as the soul they bear,
And, as its Maker is, divine.

THE BITTER HARVEST.

WHO reaps the harvest of his soul,
And garners up thought's golden grain,
For him in vain life's tempests rave,
Fate's rude shocks buffet him in vain.

The storms which shipwreck feebler souls,
Beat harmlessly on him ; the wind,
Which whirls away the domes of pride,
Braces the sinews of his mind.

He is set within a tower of strength,
Beyond thick walls and cloisters still ;
Where, as he sits, no faintest breath
Stirs the smooth current of his will.

He is stretched in a smiling valley, where,
When hills are dark, the full sun shines ;
Brings gold upon the waving fields,
And purple clusters on the vines.

He lies in a boundless sylvan shade,
While all the fields are parched around ;
And hears a sweet bird, singing, singing,
With one clear monotone of sound.

Far, far away from the busy crowd
And chaffering of the mart, he stands,
Like a statue on a lonely hill,
Pondering a scroll within its hands.

Or one who, from high convent walls,
Looks down at eve upon the plain,
And sees the children at their sport,
And turns to chant and prayer again ;

So rich, and yet so very poor,
So fruitful, yet so void of fruit ;
Removed from human hopes and fears,
Far as the man is from the brute ;

So troubled, 'neath a face of calm ;
So bound with chains, though seeming free ;
So dead, though with a name to live,
That it were better not to be.

OF LOVE AND SLEEP.

I SAW Sleep stand by an enchanted wood,
Thick lashes drooping o'er her heavy eyes ;
Leaning against a flower-cupped tree she stood,
The night air gently breathed with slumbrous sighs.
Such cloak of silence o'er the world was spread,
As on Nile sands clings round the mighty dead.

About her birds were dumb, and blooms were bowed,
And a thick heavy sweetness filled the air ;
White robed she seemed ; and hidden as in a cloud,
A star-like jewel in her raven hair.
Downward to earth her cold torch would she turn
With feeble fires that might no longer burn.

And in her languid limbs and loosened zone
Such beauty dwelt ; and in her rippling hair,
As of old time was hers, and hers alone,
The mother of gods and men divinely fair ;
When whiter than white foam or sand she lay,
The fairest thing beneath the eye of day.

To her came Love, a comely youth and strong,
Fair as the morning of a day in June ;
Around him breathed a faint sweet air of song,
And his limbs moved as to a joyous tune :
With golden locks blown back, and eyes aflame,
To where the sleeping maiden leant, he came.

Then they twain passed within that mystic grove
Together, and with them I, myself unseen.
Oh, strange, sweet land ! wherein all men may prove
The things they would, the things which might have
been ;
Hopeless hopes blossom, withered youth revives,
And sunshine comes again to darkened lives.

What sights were theirs in that blest wonder-land ?
See, the white mountain-summits, framed in cloud,
Redden with sunset ; while below them stand
The solemn pine-woods like a funeral crowd ;
And lower still the vineyards twine, and make
A double vintage in the tranquil lake.

Or, after storm-tost nights, on some sea isle
The sudden tropical morning bursts ; and lo !
Bright birds and feathery palms, the green hills smile,
Strange barks, with swarthy crews, dart to and fro ;
And on the blue bay, glittering like a crown,
The white domes of some fair historic town.

Or, they fare northward ever, northward still,
At midnight, under the unsetting sun ;
O'er endless snows, from hill to icy hill,
Where silence reigns with death, and life is done :
Till from the North a sweet wind suddenly ;
And hark ! the warm waves of the fabulous sea.

Or, some still eve, when summer days are long.
And the mown hay is sweet, and wheat is green,
They hear some wood-bird sing the old fair song
Of joys to be, greater than yet have been.
Stretched 'neath the snowy hawthorn, till the star,
Hung high in heaven, warns them that home is far.

Or, on the herbless, sun-struck hills, by night,
Under the silent peaks, they hear the loud
Wild flutes ; and onward, by the ghostly light,
Whirled in nude dances, sweeps the maddened crowd ;
Till the fierce eddy seize them, and they prove
The shame, the rapture, of unfettered love.

Or, by the sacred hearth they seem to sit,
While firelight gleams on many a sunny head ;
At that fair hour, before the lamp is lit,
When hearts are fullest, though no word be said,—
When the world fades, and rank and wealth and fame,
Seem, matched with this, no better than a name.

All these they knew ! and then a breeze of day
Stirred the dark wood ; and then they seemed to come
Forth with reluctant feet among the gray,
Bare fields, unfanciful ; and all the flame
Was burnt from out Love's eyes, and from his hair,
And his smooth cheek was marked with lines of care.

And paler showed the maid, more pure and white
And holier than before. But when I said,
“ Sweet eyes, be opened ; ” lo, the unveiled sight
Was as the awful vision of the dead !
Then knew I, breathing slow, with difficult breath,
That Love was one with Life, and Sleep with Death.

BLIND.

THE girl who from her father's door
Sees the cold storm-cloud sweep the sea,
Cries, wrestling with her anguish sore,
My love ! my love ! ah, where is he ?
And locks her fears within her breast,
Sickening ; while 'neath the breathless blaze
He lies, and dreams, in broken rest,
Of homely faces,—happier days.

But when a calm is on the deep,
And scarcely from the quivering blue,
The waves, soft murmur, half asleep,
Speaks hope that he is well, and true :
The brave ship sinks to rise no more
Beneath the thunderous surge ; and he,
A pale corpse floating on the sea,
Or dashed like seaweed on the shore.

TO HER PICTURE.

As one who on a lonely bed of pain
Feels the soft hand he felt when he was young ;
Or, who at eve, on some far Eastern plain,
Hears the old songs once by his mother sung :
So to me, looking on thy portrait, dear,
Thou and my youth and love are ever near.

It may be that the painter failed to show,
How should he not? the soul within thine eyes,—
Their blue unruffled depths, thy cheeks aglow
With virgin blushes that unbidden rise ;
Thy coral lips, thy white neck, round, and fair,
Or the sweet prodigal auburn of thy hair.

How should he? Not for him thou wast, but me ;
Love shot no sudden splendour in his eyes ;
Love guided not his hand, content to see
Mere beauty, as of sunset-hills or skies ;
Nor soothed his dull ear with the mystic strain,
Heard once a life, and nevermore again.

Only the lovely shell he saw ; the cloak,
The perfect vesture of the hidden soul.
Not for his eyes thy slumbering angel woke,
Stretched in deep sleep, where love's broad waters roll :
Had he but seen her wings of silver move,
He had forgot to paint, and learned to love.

Yet is his skill to me for ever blest,
For that which it has left of grace and truth ;
Those sweet eyes shine, yet need no time of rest,
Still thy fair cheek retains its rounded youth.
In wakeful nights I light my lamp, and know
The same dear face I knew long years ago.

Yet worn am I, too old for love, and gray.
Too faithful heart, thou shouldst not still abide
With such as I, nor longer deign to stay :
These are the follies wiser worldlings chide.
Thou wouldst transfer those glances, wert thou wise,
To younger lives and more responsive eyes.

Ah ! no, remain ; not thus you looked of yore ;
Another, perhaps more worthy, bore the prize ;
I could not tell you then the love I bore,
Or read the soft requital in your eyes ;
Now no change comes, now thou art always kind,
Then thou wast cold and changeful as the wind.

THE RETURN.

HE stood above the well-known shore ;
 Behind, the sea stretched dull and gray ;
And slowly with the breeze of morn
 The great ship forged away.

Almost he wished she might return,
 And speed him to some further change ;
The old scenes greeted him again,
 And yet all things were strange.

There were the dreams he used to dream
 In the long nights when day was here ;
The shady Sunday path to church,
 The winding brooklet clear.

The woods with violets blue in Spring,
 The fallow where they chased the hare,
The gable peeping through the elms,
 All filled him with despair.

For all was there except the past—
The past, his youth for dross had sold !
The past which after-years in vain
Prize more than all their gold.

Then age fell on him with a flash,
Time smote him, and his soul grew gray ;
And thoughts in busier scenes unknown,
Chased youth and hope away.

The past, which seemed so near before,
A step might gain it, came to be
A low cloud sunk beyond a gulf,
Wider than any sea.

Nor what the present had in store,
Knowing ; at last his great suspense
Grew to a bitter load of pain,
Too great for mortal sense.

So, by the well-known paths at last,
He gained the well-remembered door,
Sick for a voice which he should hear,
Ah ! never, never, more.

Strange children round, a stranger's face
Of wonder, so the dream was o'er.
He turned ; the dead past comes not back.
No, never, never, more.

FOR EVER.

For ever and for ever

The changeless oceans roar ;
And dash their thundering surges down
Upon the sounding shore :
Yet this swift soul, this lightning will,
Shall these, while they roll on, be still ?

For ever and for ever

The eternal mountains rise,
And lift their virgin snows on high
To meet the silent skies.
Yet shall this soul which measures all,
While these stand steadfast, sink and fall ?

For ever and for ever

The swift suns roll through space ;
From age to age they wax and wane,
Each in its ordered place :
Yet shall this soul, whose inner eye
Foretells their cycles, fade and die ?

For ever and for ever

We have been, and we are,
Unchanging as the ocean wave,

Unresting as the star :

Though suns stand still, and time be o'er,
We are, and shall be, evermore.



BEHIND THE VEIL.

I PACED along
The dim cathedral wrapped in reverend gloom ;
I heard the sweet child's song
Spring upwards like a fountain ; and the boom
Of the tempestuous organ-music swell ;
The hushed low voices and the silvery bell ;
The incense-laden air ; the kneeling throng :
I knew them all, and seemed to hear the cry
Of countless myriads, rising deep and strong,—
Help us ! we faint, we die.
Our knees are weak, our eyes are blind ;
We seek what we shall never find.
Show but Thy face, and we are Thine,
Unknown, Ineffable, Divine !

I heard the loud
Muezzin from the slender minaret call
"To prayer, To prayer ;" and lo ! the busy crowd,
Merchant and prince and water-carrier, all
Turned from the world, and, rapt in worship, knelt,
Facing the holy city ; and I felt
That from those myriads kneeling, prostrate, bowed,
A low moan rises to the throne on high,—
Not shut out quite by error's thickest cloud,—
Help us ! we faint, we die.
Our knees are weak, our eyes are blind ;
We seek what we shall never find.
Show but Thy face, and we are Thine,
Unknown, Ineffable, Divine.

I stood before
The glaring temples on the burning plain ;
I heard the hideous roar
Rise to the stars to drown the shrieks of pain,
What time the murderous idol swept along.
I listened to the innocent, mystic song,
Breathed to the jewelled Lotus evermore,
In the elder lands, through the ages, like a sigh,
And heard in low, sweet chant, and hateful roar,—
Help us ! we faint, we die.
Our knees are weak, our eyes are blind ;
We seek what we shall never find.
Show but Thy face, and we are Thine,
Unknown, Ineffable, Divine !

Ay : everywhere
Echoes the same exceeding bitter cry.
Yet can the Father bear
To hide His presence from the children's eye ;
Lets loose on good and bad the plague and sword ;
And though wrong triumph, answers not a word ?
Only deep down in the heart doth He declare
His constant presence ; there, though the outward sky
Be darkened, shines a little speck of fair,—
A light which cannot die.
Though knees be weak, and eyes be blind ;
Though we may seek, and never find ;
Here doth His hidden glory shine,
Unknown, Ineffable, Divine !

VISIONS.

OfT in the blazing summer noon,
And oft beneath the frosty moon,
When earth and air were hushed and still,
And absolute silence seemed to fill
The farthest border-lands of space,
I loved in childish thought to trace
Glimpses of change, which might transform
The voiceless calm to furious storm ;
Broke the dull spell, which comes to bind
In after-years the sluggish mind ;
And pictured, borne on fancy's wings,
The end of all created things.

Then have I seen with dreaming eye,
The blue depths of the vaulted sky
Rent without noise ; and in their stead
A wonder-world of fancy spread,
A golden city, with domes and spires,
Lit by a strange sun's mystic fires.
Portals of dazzling chrysolite,
Long colonnades of purest white ;

Streets paved with gold and jewels rare,
And higher, in the ambient air,
A shining Presence undefined :
Swift seraphs stooping swift as wind
From pole to pole, and that vast throng
Which peopled Dante's world of song ;
The last great inquest which shall close
The tale of human joys and woes ;
The dreadful Judge, the opening tomb,
And all the mystery of doom.
Then woke to find the vision vain,
And sun or moon shine calm again.

No longer, save in memory's glass,
These vanished visions come and pass ;
The clearer light of fuller day
Has chased these earlier dreams away.
Faith's eye grows dim with too much light,
And fancy flies our clearer sight.
But shall we mourn her day is o'er,
That these rapt visions come no more ?
Nay ; knowledge has its splendours too,
Brighter than Fancy's brightest hue.
I gaze now on the heavens, and see
How, midst their vast immensity,
By cosmic laws the planets roll,
Sped onwards by a central soul ;

How farther still, and still more far,
World beyond world, star beyond star,
So many, and so far, that speech
And thought must fail the sum to reach.
This universe of nature teems
With things more strange than fancy's dreams ;
And so at length, with clearer eye,
Soar beyond childhood's painted sky,
Up to the Lord of great and small,
Not onewhere, but pervading all :
Who made the music of the spheres,
And yet inclines an ear that hears
The faintest prayer, the humblest sigh,
The strong man's groan, the childish cry ;
Who guides the stars, yet without whom
No humblest floweret comes to bloom,
No lowliest creature comes to birth,
No dead leaf flutters to the earth :
Who breathed into our souls the breath,
Which neither time nor change nor death,
Nor hurtling suns at random hurled
And dashed together, world on world,
Can ever kill or quench, till He
Bends down, and bids them not to be.



DOUBT.

Who but has seen
Once in his life, when youth and health ran high,
The fair, clear face of truth
 Grow dark to his eye?
Who but has known
Cold mists of doubt and icy questionings
Creep round him like a nightmare, blotting out
 The sight of better things.

A hopeless hour,
When all the voices of the soul are dumb,
When o'er the tossing seas
 No light may come,
 When God and right
Are gone, and seated on the empty throne
Are dull philosophies and words of wind,
 Making His praise their own.

Better than this,
The burning sins of youth, the old man's greed,
Than thus to live inane ;
 To sit and read,
 And with blind brain
Daily to treasure up a deadly doubt,
And live a life from which the light has fled,
 And faith's pure fire gone out.

 Until at last,
For some blest souls, but never here for all,
Burns out a sudden light,
 And breaks the thrall,
 And doubt has fled,
And the soul rises, with a clearer sight
For this its pain, its sorrow, its despair,
 To God and truth and right.

 Plead we for those
Gently and humbly, as befitteth men
On whom the same chill shade
 Broods now as then.
 So shall they learn
How an eternal wisdom rules above,
And all the cords of Being are gathered up
 In an unfailing love.

ST. DAVID'S HEAD.

SALT sprays deluge it, wild waves buffet it, hurricanes
rave ;

Summer and winter, the depths of the ocean girdle it
round ;

In leaden dawns, in golden noon-tides, in silvery moon
light

Never it ceases to hear the old sea's mystical sound.

Surges vex it evermore

By gray cave and sounding shore.

Think of the numberless far-away centuries, long before
man,

When the hot earth with monsters teemed, and with
monsters the deep,

And the red sun loomed faint, and the moon was caught
fast in the motionless air,

And the warm waves seethed through the haze in a secular
sleep.

Rock was here and headland then,

Ere the little lives of men.

Over it long the mastodons crashed through the tropical
forest,
And the great bats swooped overhead through the half-
defined blue ;
Then they passed, and the hideous ape-man, speechless
and half-erect,
Through weary ages of time tore and gibbered and
slew.

Grayer skies and chiller air,
But the self-same rock was there.

Then the savage came and went, and Briton and Roman
and Saxon,
Till our England grew rich and great, and her white
sails covered the sea ;
Thus through all this long story of ours, civil progress
and vanquished foeman,
From Crecy to Trafalgar, from the bondsman down to
the free,
Still those dark rocks, and beneath
Keeps the sea its face of death.

So it shall be when the tide of our greatness has ebbed
to the shallows ;
So when there floats not a ship on this storm-tossed
westerly main,

Hard by, the minster crumbles, the city has shrunk to a village ;

Thus shall we shrink one day, and our forests be pathless again ;

And the headland stern shall stand,

Guarding an undiscovered land.

Vex it, O changeless ocean ; rave round it, tempests unceasing ;

Sink it, great earthquakes, deep in the depths of the fathomless sea ;

Burn them, fierce fires of the centre, burn rock and ocean together,

Till the red globe flare throughout space, through the ages to be.

Cease, make an end, dull world, begone ;

How shall I cease while you roll on ?

Time, oh, horrible ! Space, oh, terrible ! Infinite Void !

Dreadful abysses of Being ! blighting a finite brain ;

How shall the creatures of thought subsist, when the thinker ceases ?

Begone, dull figments, be done ! not alone shall you dare to remain.

Without me you yourselves must fall ;

I hold the measure of you all.

IN VOLHYNIA.

In Volhynia the peasant mothers,
When spring-time brings back the leaves,
And the first swallows dart and twitter
Under the cottage eaves,—

Sit mute at their windows, and listen,
With eyes brimming over with tears,
To the broken sounds which are wafted
To their eager watching ears.

And throw out bread and honey
To the birds as they scintillate by ;
And hearts full of yearning and longing,
Borne out on the wings of a sigh.

For they think that their dear lost children,
The little ones who are gone,
Come back thus to the heartsick mothers
Who are toiling and sorrowing on.

And those sun-lit wings and flashing
White breasts, to their tear-dimmed eyes
Bring visions of white child-angels
Floating in Paradise.

And again to the sounds they hearken,
Which grew silent while incomplete,
The music of childish laughter,
The patter of baby feet.

Till the hearts which are barren and childless,
The homes which are empty and cold :
The nests whence the young have departed,
Are filled with young life as of old.

Thus each spring, to those peasant mothers,
Comes the old Past again and again ;
And those sad hearts quicken and blossom,
In a rapture of sorrowless pain.



THE LIVING PAST.

O FAITHFUL souls that watch and yearn,
Expectant of the coming light,
With kindling hearts and eyes that burn
With hope to see the rule of right ;

The time of peace and of good will,
When the thick clouds of wrong and pain
Roll up as from a shining hill,
And never more descend again ;

The perfect day, the golden year,
The end of sorrow and of sighs ;
Whether the heavenly change be here,
Or far beyond the sunset skies,—

I cherish you, I love your faith,
I long with you that this may be ;
But hark, a dreary voice which saith,
“ Vain dreamer, what were it to thee ! ”

For though the blest hour strike before
Another sunrise vex the earth,
And pain and evil rule no more,
But vanish in the newer birth,—

Though war and hatred come to cease,
And sorrow be no more, nor sin,
And in their stead an endless peace
Its fair unbroken reign begin,—

What comfort have ye? What shall blot
The memories of bitter years,
Of joys which have been, but are not,
And floods of unforgotten tears?

The painful records graven clear
On carven rock or deathless page;
The long unceasing reign of fear,
The weary tale of lust and rage;

The ills whose dark sum baffles thought,
Done day by day beneath the sun?
“That which is done,” the old sage taught,
“Not God Himself can make undone.”

For that which has been, still must live,
And 'neath the shallow Present last.
Oh, who will sweet oblivion give,
Who free us from the dreadful Past?

CHANGES.

You see that tall house opposite ?
Three times within the fleeting year,
Since last the summer-time was here,
Great changes have gone over it.

For first a bridal bright and gay
Filled the long street with riotous sound ;
And amid smiles from all around,
The newly-wedded passed away.

And when the violets came once more,
And lambs were born, a concourse went,
Still gayer, still more innocent,
To christening from that stately door.

And now the mute house dull and drear,
From blinded eyes, stares blank and white ;
And amid dust and glaring light,
The black lines slowly disappear.

ALONE.

WHAT shall it profit a man
To have stood by the source of things,
To have spent the fair years of his youthful prime
In mystical questionings ;
To have scaled the lovely height,
While his brothers slept below ;
To have seen the vision bright
Which but few on earth may know,—
If when his task be done
He lives his life alone ?
If in the busy street
None come whom he may greet ?
If in his lonely room
With the night the shadows deepen into ghostly
 shapes of gloom ?

It may be his soul may say,
“I have gained me a splendid dower ;
I can look around on the toiling crowd,
With the pride of a conscious power.

I can hear the passer-by
Tell of all my world-wide fame ;
I have friends I shall not see
Who dwell fondly on my name.
If the sweet smile of wife
Light not my joyless life,
If to my silent home
No childish laughter come,
Shall I no solace find
In communion with the monarchs of the fair
broad realm of mind ? ”

But when sickness wears him, or age
Creeps on, and his soul doth yearn
For the tender hand and the soothing voice
That shall never more return
When the crowd of careless friends,
Not unkind, but each one set
Safe within white walls of home,
All the world without forget,—
Shall not old memories rise
'Twixt book and weary eyes,
Till knowledge come to seem
A profitless vague dream ?
Shall not he sometimes sigh
For the careless past unlearnèd, and the happy
days gone by ?

Ah ! not to be happy alone,
Are men sent, or to be glad.
Oft-times the sweetest music is made
By the voices of the sad.
The thinker oft is bent
By a too-great load of thought ;
The discoverer's soul grows sick
With the secret vainly sought :
Lonely may be the home,
No breath of fame may come,
Yet through their lives doth shine
A purple light Divine,
And a nobler pain they prove
Than the bloom of lower pleasures, or the
fleeting spell of love.

SEA VOICES.

PEACE, moaning Sea ; what tale have you to tell ?

What mystic tidings, all unknown before ?

Whether you break in thunder on the shore,
Or whisper like the voice within the shell,
O moaning Sea, I know your burden well.

'Tis but the old dull tale, filled full of pain ;

The finger on the dial-plate of time,

Advancing slow with pitiless beat sublime,
As stoops the day upon the fading plain ;
And that has been which may not be again.

The voice of yearning, deep but scarce expressed,

For something which is not, but may be yet ;

Too full of sad continuance to forget,
Too troubled with desires to be at rest,
Too self-conflicting ever to be blest.

The voice of hopes and aspirations high,
Swallowed in sand, or shivered on the rock ;
Tumultuous life dashed down with sudden shock ;
And passionate protests, narrowed to a sigh,
From hearts too weak to live,—too strong to die.

The voice of old beliefs which long have fled,
Gone with a shriek, and leaving naught behind,
But some vague utterance, cold as wintry wind,—
Some dim remembrance of a ghostly dread
Which lingers still when faith itself is dead.

And, above all, through thund'rous wintry roar,
And summer ripple, this, and this alone,
For ever do I make this barren moan :—
No end, there is no end,—on Time's dull shore
I wail, I beat, I thunder, evermore.

BERLIN, 1871.

THE spring day was all of a flutter with flags ;
The mad chimes were beating like surf in the air ;
The beggars had slunk out of sight with their rags ;
And the balconies teemed with the rich and the fair.

And below, on each side, the long vistas were set
In a frame-work of faces, patient and white,—
Wives, mothers, sweethearts, with full eyes wet,
And sick hearts longing to see the sight.

Till at length, when the evening was waning, there ran
A stir through the crowd, and far-off, like a flame,
The setting sun burned on the helms of the van,
And with trampling of hoofs the proud conquerors
came.

And with every step they advanced, you might hear
Women's voices, half maddened with long-deferred joy :
"Thank God ! he is safe. See, my love, we are here !
See ! here am I, darling ; and this is our boy !"

Or, "Here am I, dearest, still faithful and true ;
Your own love as of old !" Or an agonised cry,
As the loved face came not with the comrades she knew
And the rough soldiers found not a word to reply.

And pitiful hands led her softly away,
With a loving heart rent and broken in twain ;
And the triumph sweeps onward, in gallant array,—
The life and the hope, the despair and the pain.

Where was it? In Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome?
Ages since, or to-day ; in the old world, or new?
Who shall tell? From all time these strange histories
come ;
And to-day, as of old, the same story is true.

And the long line sweeps past, and the dull world
rolls on
Though the rapture is dead and the sad tears are dry ;
And careless of all, till the progress be done,
Life rides like a conqueror triumphing by.



THE BEACON.

FAIR shines the beacon from its lonely rock,
Stable alone amid the unstable waves :
In vain the surge leaps with continual shock,
In vain around the wintry tempest raves,
And ocean thunders in her sounding caves.

For here is life within the gate of death,
Calm light and warmth amid the storm without ;
Here sleeping love breathes with untroubled breath,
And faith, clear-eyed, pierces the clouds of doubt
And monstrous depths which compass her about.

So calm, so pure, yet prisoned and confined ;
Fenced by white walls from pleasure as from pain.
Not always glooms the sea or shrieks the wind :
Sometimes light zephyrs curl the azure main,
And the sweet sea-nymphs glide with all their train.

Or Aphrodite rises from the foam,
And lies all rosy on the golden sand,
And o'er the purple plains the Nereids roam ;
Sweet laughter comes, borne from the joyous band,
And faint sweet odours from the far-off land.

And straightway the impatient soul within
Loathes its white house which to a jail doth turn ;
Careless of true or false, of right or sin,
Careless of praying hands or eyes that burn,
Or aught that sense can feel or mind discern.

Knowing but this,—that the unknown is blest,
Holding delight of free untrammelled air :
Delight of toil sweeter than any rest,
Fierce storms with cores of calm for those who dare
Black rayless nights than fairest noons more fair.

And drifting forth at eve in some frail boat,
Beholds the old light, like a setting star,
Sink in the sea, and still doth fare and float
Adown the night till day-break shows afar,—
And hark the faint low thunders of the bar.

Nor if indeed he reach the Blessèd Isle,
Nor if those pitiless crests shall plunge him down,
Knows he ; but whether breathless azure smile,
Or furious night and horrible tempests frown,
Living or dying, Freedom wears a crown.

THE GARDEN OF REGRET.

BEYOND the dim walls of the shadowy Past,
A sweet vague host of fancies flourishes,
Like garden seeds in some rough hollow cast,
Which all unasked the kind earth nourishes,
And sends up tender blooms more sweet and fair
Than the dull Present rears with all its care.

There on its thin stem hangs the frail white flower ;
Far sweeter now she shines within the shade,
Than when of old within the trim-kept bower
And perfumed lush parterres her home she made ;
Because her sister blooms are past and gone,
And this alone it is that lingers on.

The same white flower,—but oh, the depths of change !
Before, the creamy petals, broad and strong,
Were all adust with gold, and filled with strange
Sweet scents, which lurked the odorous depths among ;
Deep in her honeyed wells, the bee would stay
Content, and birds sing round the live-long day.

The same white flower—yet changed in scent and hue.

Now the fair feeble petals curl and shrink ;

The dead smooth surfaces are veined with blue ;

No honeyed draughts they hold for bee to drink,

Nor busy hum, nor joyous song is heard.

What hath she left to charm or bee or bird ?

Only a faint sweet odour lingers yet,

Dearer than those rich scents of former years :

A fragile fairness, fairer through regret,

And watered by the dewy fount of tears.

To me that outcast flower is dearer grown,

Than when in those fair gardens overblown.

I set her in the garden of my heart,

And water her from life's sincerest spring ;

And lo ! once more the frail stems quicken and start,

Fair honeyed blooms arise and blithe birds sing :

The old sweet flower in scent and gorgeous hue,

But not the tender grace that once I knew.

Alas ! not in the Present will she grow :

The Present has its own blooms sweet and bright ;

Within its four walls life's fair pleasures blow,

And each gay season brings its own delight :

Far off in dewy shades the exile sweet

Grows fair, and paths untrodden by living feet.

There let her stay. I know not if my theme
Be love, or some fair child of heart or mind :
Young friendships, hopes, beliefs, which like a dream
Pass from us leaving some sweet ghost behind.
Leave them behind, they have been ; others are,
And shall be. Lo ! the spring time is not far.



SECOND SERIES.

1874.



TO AN UNKNOWN POET.*

DEAR friend, who, two long centuries ago,
Didst tread where since my grandsires trod,
Along thy devious Usk's untroubled flow,
Breathing thy soul to God.

I seek, I, born in these our later days,
Using the measure thou didst love,
With halting tribute of too tardy praise,
A poet throned above.

I in the self-same venerable halls
And gray quadrangles made my home,
Which heard, new-built, within their recent walls,
Thy youthful footsteps come.

A little grayer now and stiller grown,
The tranquil refuge now, as then,
Where our dear country glories in her own,
Apart from alien men.

* Henry Vaughan, the Silurist, died near Brecon, 1695.

There, on thy musings broke the painful sound
Of arms ; the long-plumed cavaliers
Clanged thro' the courts—the low fat fields around
Were filled with strife and tears.

Constrained by promptings of thy ancient race,
Thy gown and books thou flungst away,
To meet the sturdy Roundhead face to face
On many a hard-fought day,

Till thy soft soul grew sick, and thou didst turn
To our old hills ; and there, ere long,
Love for thy Amoret, at times, would burn
In some too fervid song.

But soon thy wilder pulses stayed, and, life
Grown equable, thy sweet muse mild,
Sobered by tranquil love of child and wife,
Flowed pure and undefiled.

A humble healer thro' a life obscure,
Thou didst expend thy homely days ;
Sweet Swan of Usk ! few know how clear and pure
Are thy unheeded lays.

One poet shall become a household name
Into the nation's heart ingrown ;
One more than equal miss the meed of fame,
And live and die unknown.

So thou, surviving in thy lonely age,
All but thy own undying love
Didst pour upon the sympathetic page,
Words which all hearts can move—

So quaintly fashioned as to add a grace
To the sweet fancies which they bear,
Even as a bronze delved from some ancient place
For very rust shows fair.

“They all are gone into the world of light!”
It is thy widowed muse that sings,
And then mounts upward from our dazzled sight
On heavenward soaring wings.

“He that hath found some fledged bird’s nest may
know”

“At first sight if the bird be flown;”
“But what fair dell or grove he sings in now,”
“That is to him unknown.”

“And yet, as angels in some brighter dreams”
“Call to the soul when man doth sleep,”
“So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted
themes,”
“And into glory peep.”

"O father of eternal life and all"

"Created glories under Thee!"

"Resume Thy Spirit from this world of thrall"

"Into true liberty."

* * * * *

Thou hast rejoined thy dear ones now, and art,

Dear soul, as then thou wouldst be, free.

I, still a prisoner, strive to do my part

In memory of thee.

Thou art so high, and yet unknown : shall I

Repine that I too am obscure?

Nay, what care I, though all my verse shall die,

If only it is pure?

So some new singer of the days to be,

Reading this page with soft young eyes,

Shall note the tribute which I pay to thee

With youth's sweet frank surprise.

And musing in himself, perchance shall say,

"Two bards whom centuries part are here—

One whose high fame and name defy decay,

And one who held him dear."

COMFORT.

Tho' love be bought and honour sold,
The sunset keeps its glow of gold,
And round the rosy summits cold
The white clouds hover, fold on fold.

Tho' over-ripe the nations rot,
Tho' right be dead and faith forgot,
Tho' one dull cloud the heavens may blot,
The tender leaf delayeth not.

Tho' all the world lie sunk in ill,
The bounteous autumns mellow still,
By virgin sand and sea-worn hill
The constant waters ebb and fill.

From out the throng and stress of lies,
From out the painful noise of sighs,
One voice of comfort seems to rise :
"It is the meaner part that dies."

SONG.

IF ever, dear,
I might at last the barren victory gain,
After long struggle and laborious pain,
And many a secret tear,
To think, since think I must of thee,
Not otherwise than thou of me.

Haply I might
Thy chilling coldness, thy disdain, thy pride,
Which draw me, half reluctant, to thy side,
With a like meed requite,
And I my too fond self despise,
Seeing with disenchanted eyes.

But now, alas,
So fast a prisoner am I to my love,
No power there is that can my chains remove.
So sweet the caged hours pass,
That, if it parted me from thee,
I would not willingly grow free.

Nor would I dare
To ask for recompense of love again,
Who love thee for the height of thy disdain.

Thou wouldst not show so fair
If we should own an equal flame,
Unequal souls, in love the same.

Full well I know
That what I worship is not wholly thee,
But a fair dream, a pious fantasy.

Such as at times doth grow
On yearnings of the cloistered mind,
Or the rapt vision of the blind.

Scorn me then, sweet,
I would not thou shouldst leave thy lofty place.
Thy lover should not see thee face to face,
But prostrate at thy feet.
No recompense, no equal part I seek,
Only that thou be strong and I be weak.

OH, SNOWS SO PURE !

OH, snows so pure ! oh, peaks so high !
I lift to you a hopeless eye.

I see your icy ramparts drawn
Between the sleepers and the dawn.

I see you, when the sun has set,
Flush with the dying daylight yet.

I see you, passionless and pure,
Above the lightnings stand secure ;

But may not climb, for now the hours
Are spring's, and earth a maze of flowers.

And now, 'mid summer's dust and heat,
I stay my steps for childish feet.

And now, when autumn glows, I fear
To lose the harvest of the year.

Now winter frowns, and life runs slow,
Even on the plains I tread thro' snow.

While you are veiled, or, dimly seen,
Only reveal what might have been ;

And where high hope would once aspire
Broods a vast storm-cloud dealing fire.

Oh, snows so pure ! oh, peaks so high !
I shall not reach you till I die !



THE BEGINNINGS OF FAITH.

ALL travail of high thought,
All secrets vainly sought,
All struggles for right, heroic, perpetually fought.

Faint gleams of purer fire,
Conquests of gross desire,
Whereby the fettered soul ascends continually higher.

Sweet cares for love or friend
Which ever heavenward tend,
Too deep and true and tender to have on earth their end.

Vile hearts malign and fell,
Lives which no tongue may tell,
So dark and dread and shameful that they breathe a
present hell.

White mountain, deep-set lake,
Sea wastes which surge and break,
Fierce storms which, roaring from the north, the midnight
forests shake.

Fair morns of summer days,
Rich harvest eves that raise
The soul and heart o'erburdened to an ecstasy of praise.

Low whispers, vague and strange,
Which through our being do range,
Breathing perpetual presage of some mighty coming
change.

These in the soul do breed
Thoughts which, at last, shall lead
To some clear, firm assurance of a satisfying creed.

A MEMORY.

Down dropped the sun upon the sea,
The gradual darkness filled the land.
And 'mid the twilight, silently,
I felt the pressure of a hand.

And a low voice : " Have courage, friend.
Be of good cheer, 'tis not for long ;
He conquers who awaits the end,
And dares to suffer and be strong."

I have seen many a land since then,
Known many a joy and many a pain,
Victor in many a strife of men,
Vanquished again and yet again.

The ancient sorrow now is not,
Since time can heal the keenest smart ;
Yet the vague memory, scarce forgot,
Lingers deep down within the heart.

Still, when the ruddy flame of gold
Fades into gray on sea and land,
I hear the low sweet voice of old,
I feel the pressure of a hand.

THE NEW ORDER.

THE old lives are dead and gone and rotten,
The old thoughts shall never more be thought,
The old faiths have failed and are forgotten,
The old strifes are done, the fight is fought,
And with a clang and roll, the new creation
Bursts forth 'mid tears and blood and tribulation.

Sweet they were, the old days that are ended,
The golden years, the happy careless hours
Then, like Pagan gods on the asphodel extended,
Dreaming, men wove them fancies fair as flowers.
Love laid near them, Art to cheer them, youthful Beauty
Sitting crowned upon the marble throne of Duty.

All good things were theirs to cherish—lives grown finer
From the heritage of long ancestral ease,
And a nobler port, and temperate mien diviner
Than their labours and their vigils leave to these ;
Gentler voices, smiles more gracious, and the fashion
Of their soft lives tuned to pity and compassion.

Naught men knew of science, now grown rigid
With its teaching of inexpiable sin ;
Nor the dull pedantic gospel, dead and frigid,
Of a heaven where mind alone may enter in,
Doom awaiting, stern and silent, all transgression,
And no saint with power to make an intercession.

For a Ruler, as men thought they saw above them,
More than earthly rulers, pitiful and mild,
A Father with a stronger love to love them
Than the love an earthly father bears his child—
God above them, and for pleader and defender
Christ's face stooping, like his mother's, true and tender.

But now there seems no place for the Creator
To hold his long unbroken chain of law;
Nor any need for heaven-sent Mediator,
Nor the Providence our fathers thought they saw.
Only a dull world-system, always tending
To a blind goal, by a blind rule unbending.

And for the courtesy and tender graces,
The chivalries and charities of old,
A dull and equal arrogance effaces
Soft sympathies by hard demands and cold ;
And the giver giveth not, lest any blame him,
And the taker may not take, lest taking shame him.

Be still, oh ye of little faith, repining
That the purpose of the Eternal will is dead.
The silent stars forget not yet their shining,
Daily the full sun journeys overhead.
How shall mind's realm alone forget its reason,
When the sure years roll season after season?

There shall rise from this confused sound of voices
A firmer faith than that our fathers knew,
A deep religion, which alone rejoices
In worship of the Infinitely True,
Not built on rite or portent, but a finer
And purer reverence for a Lord diviner.

There shall come from out this noise of strife and groaning
A broader and a juster brotherhood,
A deep equality of aim, postponing
All selfish seeking to the general good.
There shall come a time when each shall to another
Be as Christ would have him—brother unto brother.

There shall come a time when knowledge wide extended,
Sinks each man's pleasure in the general health,
And all shall hold irrevocably blended
The individual and the commonwealth,
When man and woman in an equal union
Shall merge, and marriage be a true communion.

There shall come a time when brotherhood shows stronger
Than the narrow bounds which now distract the world ;
When the cannons roar and trumpets blare no longer,
And the ironclad rusts, and battle flags are furled ;
When the bars of creed and speech and race, which sever,
Shall be fused in one humanity for ever.

Oh, glorious end ! oh, blessed consummation !

Oh, precious day ! for which we wait and yearn.

Thou shalt come, and knit men nation unto nation.

But not for us, who watch to-day and burn,

Thou shalt come, but after what long years of trial,

Weary watchings, baffled longings, dull denial !

AT MIDNIGHT.

THEY were two poor young girls, little older than children,
Who passed through the midnight streets of the city
Singing.

Poorly clad, morning-eyed, with a strange look of shyness,
Linked arms, and round cheeks, and smooth heads bent
together,
Singing.

Singing, great Heaven ! with their fresh childish voices,
Some low murmured ditty, half hymn-tune, half love-song,
Singing,

Always by hushed square, and long street deserted,
As from school by the old village street on fair evenings,
Singing,

Singing, and knowing it not, the old burden
That is born out of secular wrongs and oppressions,
Singing,

Of selfish riches, of misery and hunger,
Of sin that is bred of the wants of the wretched,
Singing,

Of poor bribes that purchase souls, of the endless,
Perpetual harvest of pain and of evil,
Singing,

So, they passed to the flaring sin-befouled places,
And amid the thick throng of the fallen I lost them,
Singing,

A hymn-tune, a love-song, a prayer chanted backward,
A witch spell unholy, a sweet suffrage saintly
Singing.

NEMESIS.

WHO, without fear
Piercing the inmost deeps of silent thought,
Has won the prize with lonely labour sought,
 And many a bitter tear,
He in his breast doth hold
 A rarer thing than gold,
And a fair treasure greater than in words is told.

For he shall learn,
Not from another's lore, but his own soul,
Whither life's hidden ocean currents roll,
 And with sure helm shall turn
Into a haven fair,
 Where, on the breathless air,
Nor wave nor storm shall break, but peace is everywhere.

There, in light boat
Laid on the soft breast of the summer sea,
Lapt day by day in great tranquillity,
 He carelessly shall float.

He scarce shall see or hear
A sight or sound of fear,
Only a low-voiced siren always gliding near.

Without the bar
The enormous surges leap from sea to sky.
Upon the ghostly inland summits high
The avalanche thunders far.
On the dull plains below,
In long successions slow
The toiling generations sow, and reap, and sow.

Dream-like, he sees
The lurid smoke blot the beleaguered town,
Or the great earthquake shake the city down ;
Labours and miseries ;
Fire takes them—famine, flood,
And fever's hideous brood.
By night the black skies redden with a glare like blood.

For him, meanwhile,
Laid in the shelter of his silken sail,
Tho' wind and storm on sea and land prevail,
The enchanted waters smile.
Always in that calm deep,
Wherein life's currents sleep,
He sees high heaven reflected, tho' all men may weep.

Yet now and then
Between the stars and him, deep, sunk below,
He starts to see a strange dead semblance grow,
Gone from the eyes of men.
Some thin and pale-eyed ghost,
By marred reflections crost,
Of thoughts, and faiths, and yearnings long since lost.

And if these fade
Betimes, he slowly gains to peace again ;
But if too long they tarry, such a pain
Those clear depths doth invade,
That for sheer terror he,
And utter misery,
Flies to the storm-wrapt hills and hungry calling sea.



TO A CHILD OF FANCY.

My little dove, my little lamb,
In whom again a child I am ;
My innocent, on whose fair head
The glories of the unknown are shed ;

Who thro' the laughing summer day
Spendest the rosy hours in play,
Too much by joyous life possest
To give a willing thought to rest ;

Who, with the earliest shades of night,
White-robed, in happy slumbers light,
Recallest in thy stainless calm
An angel resting from its psalm ;

Whence art thou come? What power could teach
The secret of thy broken speech ?
What agile limb, what stalwart arm,
Like thy sweet feebleness can charm ?

With what a rapture of surprise
This fair world meets thy steadfast eyes,
As if they saw reflected there
Faint images of scenes more fair.

Leaving another heaven behind,
A heaven on earth thou cam'st to find,
This world, so full of misery,
Opens celestial gates for thee.

Oh ! if thou mightst not e'er grow wise
With the sad learning born of sighs ;
If those soft eyes might never here
Grow dim for any bitter tear.

Vain thought,—no creature born of earth
Blooms best 'neath cloudless skies of mirth ;
Only soft rains and clouds can dress
Life's tree with flowers of blessedness.

Whate'er the lot thy fate shall give,
At least, while life is mine to live,
Thou shalt not lack a share of love,
My little lamb, my little dove !

SONG.

It was not that thy eyes
Were blue as autumn skies,
It was not that thy hair
Was as an angel's fair.
No excellence of form could move
A finer soul to so much love.

Nor that in thee I sought
For precious gems of thought,
Nor ever hoped to find
Hid treasure in thy mind.
Gray wisdom comes with time and age,
And thine was an unwritten page.

But that I seemed in thee
My other self to see,
Yet purer and more high
Than meets my inner eye,
Like that enamoured boy who, gazing down,
His lower self would in his higher drown.

THE ORGAN-BOY.

GREAT brown eyes,
Thick plumes of hair,
Old corduroys
The worse for wear ;
A buttoned jacket,
And peeping out
An ape's grave poll,
Or a guinea pig's snout ;
A sun-kissed face,
And a dimpled mouth,
With the white flashing teeth
And soft smile of the south ;
A young back bent,
Not with age or care,
But the load of poor music
'Tis fated to bear :
But a commonplace picture
To commonplace eyes,

Yet full of a charm
Which the thinker will prize.

They were stern cold rulers,
Those Romans of old,
Scorning art and letters
For conquest and gold ;
Yet leavening mankind,
In mind and in tongue,
With the laws that they made
And the songs that they sung :
Sitting rose-crowned,
With pleasure-choked breath,
As the nude young limbs crimsoned,
Then stiffened in death :
Piling up monuments
Greater than praise,
Thoughts and deeds that shall live
To the latest of days :
Adding province to province,
And sea to sea,
Till the idol fell down
And the world rose up free.

And this is the outcome,
This vagabond child
With that statue-like face
And eyes soft and mild ;

This creature so humble,
So gay, yet so meek,
Whose sole strength is only
The strength of the weak ;
Of those long cruel ages
Of lust and of guile,
Naught left us to-day
But an innocent smile.
For the laboured appeal
Of the orator's art,
A few childish accents
That reach to the heart.
For those stern legions speeding
O'er sea and o'er land,
But a pitiful glance
And a suppliant hand.
I could moralize still ;
But the organ begins,
And the tired ape swings downward
And capers and grins :

And away flies romance.
And yet, time after time,
As I dwell on days spent
In a sunnier clime,
Of blue lakes deep set
In the olive-clad mountains,

Of gleaming white palaces
Girt with cool fountains,
Of minsters where every
Carved stone is a treasure,
Of sweet music hovering
'Twixt pain and 'twixt pleasure ;
Of chambers enriched,
On all sides, overhead,
With the deathless creations
Of hands that are dead ;
Of still cloisters holy,
And twilight arcade,
Where the lovers still saunter
Thro' chequers of shade ;
Of tomb and of temple,
Arena and column,
'Mid to-day's garish splendours,
Sombre and solemn ;
Of the marvellous town
With the salt flowing street,
Where colour burns deepest,
And music most sweet ;
Of her the great mother,
Who centuries sate
'Neath a black shadow blotting
The days she was great ;
Who was plunged in such shame—
She, our source and our home—

That a foul spectre only
Was left us of Rome ;
She who, seeming to sleep
Thro' all ages to be,
Was the priests, is mankind's,
Was a slave, and is free !

I turn with grave thought
To this child of the ages,
And to all that is writ
In Time's hidden pages.
Shall young Howards or Guelphs,
In the days that shall come,
Wander forth seeking bread
Far from England and home ?

Shall they sail to new continents,
English no more,
Or turn—strange reverse—
To the old classic shore ?
Shall fair locks and blue eyes,
And the rose on the cheek,
Find a language of pity
The tongue cannot speak—
“Not English, but angels ?”
Shall this tale be told
Of Romans to be
As of Romans of old ?

Shall they too have monkeys
And music? Will any
Try their luck with an engine
Or toy spinning-jenny?

Shall we too be led
By that mirage of Art
Which saps the true strength
Of the national heart?
The sensuous glamour,
The dreamland of grace,
Which rot the strong manhood
They fail to replace;
Which at once are the glory,
The ruin, the shame,
Of the beautiful lands
And ripe souls whence they came?

Oh, my England! oh, Mother
Of Freemen! oh, sweet,
Sad toiler majestic,
With labour-worn feet!
Brave worker, girt round,
Inexpugnable, free,
With tumultuous sound
And salt spume of the sea,
Fenced off from the clamour
Of alien mankind

By the surf on the rock,
And the shriek of the wind,
Tho' the hot Gaul shall envy
The cold German flout thee,
Thy far children scorn thee,
Still thou shalt be great,
Still march on uncaring,
Thy perils unsharing,
Alone, and yet daring
Thy infinite fate.
Yet ever remembering
The precepts of gold,
That were written in part
For the great ones of old—
“Let other hands fashion
The marvels of art;
To thee fate has given
A loftier part.
To rule the wide peoples;
To bind them to thee”
By the sole bond of loving,
That bindeth the free.
To hold thy own place,
Neither lawless nor slave;
Not driven by the despot,
Nor tricked by the knave.

But these thoughts are too solemn.
So play, my child, play,

Never heeding the connoisseur
Over the way,
The last dances of course ;
Then, with scant pause between,
Home, Sweet Home," the "Old Hundredth,"
And "God Save the Queen."

See the poor children swarm
From dark court and dull street,
As the gay music quickens
The lightsome young feet.
See them now whirl away,
Now insidiously come,
With a coy grace which conquers
The squalor of home.
See the pallid cheeks flushing
With innocent pleasure
At the hurry and haste
Of the quick-footed measure.
See the dull eyes now bright,
And now happily dim,
For some soft-dying cadence
Of love-song or hymn.
Dear souls, little joy
Of their young lives have they,
So thro' hymn-tune and song-tune
Play on, my child, play.

For tho' dull pedants chatter

Talk of hindered researches,
And hours run to waste ;
Tho' they tell us of thoughts
To ennoble mankind
Which your poor measures chase
From the labouring mind ;
While your music rejoices
One joyless young heart,
Perish bookworms and books,
Perish learning and art—
Of my vagabond fancies
I'll e'en take my fill.
“Qualche cosa, signor ?”
Yes, my child, that I will.



PROCESSIONS.

To and fro, to and fro,
The long, long processions go,
Fainter now and now more bright,
Now in shadow, now in light ;
Gay and sad, and gay again,
Mixed of pleasure, mixed of pain.
Bridal song and burial dirge,
Rippling blue and leaden surge ;
Sunlit plain and storm-wrapt hill,
Saintly lives or stained with ill ;
Youth and fire and frolic mirth,
Cold age bending back to earth ;
Hope and faith and high endeavour,
Dead lives slowly waning ever ;
Gleams of varying sun and shade,
Buds that burst, and flowers that fade ;
Lives that spring, and lives that fall,
And a Hidden Will o'er all.

FOR LIFE.

SHUT in by self, as by a brazen wall,
In a dry, windless court alone,
Where no refreshing dews of eve may fall,
Nor morning sun has shone.

But ever broader, ever higher, higher,
And ever yearly stronger grown,
In long circuitous folds high towers aspire
Around her central throne.

And every year adds some fair outer-court,
Green, lit with fountains, tended well,
Some dainty pleasaunce fit for joy and sport,
But not wherein to dwell.

Or some high palace spired with fretted gold,
And tricked with gems of thought and art ;
In blank perspective ranks its chambers cold,
Too fair to touch the heart.

For far within the inmost coil of towers,
Wrapt round with shadows like a cloak,
Where on the twilight hush of slow-paced hours
Full utterance never broke ;

Neither of laughter nor the painful sound
Of great thoughts come to sudden birth,
Nor murmurs from the Sea that frets around
The dull laborious earth ;

Nor voice of love or child, nor note of glee,
Nor sigh, nor any weal nor woe—
Naught but a chill, at times, as hopelessly
The slow years come and go ;

She broods immured, a devil or a saint,
Shut fast within a lonely cell,
Peopled with beatific visions faint,
Or ghostly shapes of hell.

And every year she hears from some high gate
That breaks the dizzy circuit of the wall,
By hands invisible, but strong as fate,
The loud portcullis fall.

And every year upon her duller ear
Faint and more faint the outward echoes come,
Fainter the mingled tones of hope and fear,
To this her cloistered home.

Till, when the weary circuit's done and past,
The last gate clangs, the tall towers sway and fall,
A great voice calls with thunders, and at last
The captive breaks her thrall !



IN THE PARK.

THE stock-jobbers' madams dash
In splendour thro' park and street.
'Tis a lightning of wheels that flash,
'Tis a thunder of high-stepping feet.
Shrink aside, vile churl, for these princesses bold—
These creatures of jewels and ermine and gold—

As they loll by in insolent pride,
Scarce deigning a glance of the eye,
They scatter their mud stains far and wide
On the humbler passer-by—
Some rhymester it may be, whose bitter pen
Shall pay them their mud stains with interest again.

And, meanwhile, in some fetid street
Their spouse and provider sits—
A swindler fattening on lie and cheat,
Sole fruit of his sordid wits—
Full fed and bloated, or wan and pale,
And haunted with fears of an imminent gaol.

When my lady of high degree
Rolls by with her lackeys ablaze,
It gladdens my heart, good madams, to see
The disdain of you in her gaze.
I love her little, but, matched with you,
I could fall on my knees to a pride so true.

Or when Lais rattles by
In her vesture of visible shame,
Poor child, I whisper, and who am I
To call her dead life by its name?
Sad tawdry splendours that, one sure day,
Will spread swift pinions and flutter away!

But with you, vile spawn of deceit,
What need to be chary of ire?
Get down, I say, on your useless feet,
And cleanse them with honest mire.
Down with you, 'tis time, ere your coaches be made
The central block of a new barricade.

Yet, perhaps, since in this poor life
Things are double, each against each,
Among you sometimes is the mother and wife
With her darlings to cherish and teach,
The gentle lady, tender and kind,
With no shadow of evil on heart or mind.

Ah, riddle of things ! ah, great
Perpetual struggle and war !
The good which should be, inseparate,
From the evil things that are—
How shall I, with purblind vision, arraign
The marvellous measures of joy and pain ?

Roll by then, brave dames, roll by ;
You are part of a scheme, I trow.
No more will I look with a covetous eye
On your splendours of pomp and show ;
For I see in your gorgeous chariots the strife,
'The problem, the wonder, the satire, of life.

LOSS AND GAIN.

FROM day to day, from year to year,
New waves of change assail us here ;
Each day, each year, prolongs the chain
Where pleasure alternates with pain.

New earth-born exhalations rise,
To hide the heavens from our eyes ;
New clouds obscure the vision fair,
Which once was round us everywhere.

New precious obligations come,
New sanctities of love and home,
New tender hopes, new anxious fears,
And sweet experiences of tears.

Old tastes are lost, old thoughts grow strange,
Old longings gradually change,
Old faiths seem no more dear or true,
Lost in the full light of the new.

Youth's boundless aspirations fled,
And every wild ambition dead ;
Love not a meteor blinding sight,
But a pure ray of sober light.

And for the passionate self of old,
A deep affection, calm, not cold ;
A pitying love serenely kind,
A broader trust, a juster mind,

A faith which occupies the heart,
Tho' the brain halts to bear its part,
Which threat and promise fail to move,
Like the dim consciousness of love.

Tho' much be taken, much is left,
Not all forsaken nor bereft ;
From change on change we come to rest
And the last moment is the best.



SONG.

“ONLY a woman’s hair,”
A fair lock severed and dead ;
But where is the maiden—where
That delicate head ?

Perhaps she is rich and fair,
Perhaps she is poor and worn,
And ’twere better that one somewhere
Had never been born.

And the careless hand that threw
That faded tress away—
Ah ! the false heart that once seemed true,
Ah ! love flung away.

THE APOLOGY.

I MAY not scorn, I cannot prize
Those whose quick-coming fancies rise
Only in quaint disguise—

Some trick of speech, or mien, or dress,
Some obsolete uncomeliness,
Some ancient wickedness.

Strange words antique for things not strange,
Like broken tower and mould'ring grange,
Made fair through time and change.

Legends of knight, and squire, and dame,
With this our common life the same
In glory and in shame.

Mean lives and narrow aims which owe
The glamour and the charm they show
To that strange "Long ago ;"

Nay, meaner, lower than our own,
Because To-day is wider grown,
Knows deeper, and is known.

I doubt if anything there be
Which best thro' mask of chivalry,
Reveals myself to me ;

Myself, its yearnings and desires,
Its glimpses of supernal fires,
The something which aspires ;

Myself, the thing of blot and stain,
Which fallen, rises, falls again,
A mystery of pain ;

Myself, the toiler slow to earn,
The thinker sowing words that burn,
The sensuous in turn,

The vanquished, the disgraced, the saint,
Now free as air, now bound and faint,
By everyday constraint.

Or, if too near the present lies
For common brains and common eyes
To probe its mysteries,

If feeble fancy fails to tear
The outer husk of fact, and bare
The seed to vital air,

But too extended, too immense,
Life's orb a vast circumference
Stretches for mortal sense ;

If simpler shows the past, more fair,
Set in a pure and luminous air,
Not dimmed by mists of care,

Seeming to breathe a lighter strain
Of lutes and lyres where none complain
With undertones of pain ;—

If haply there we seem to view
Ourselves, behind a veil, yet true
The germ from which we grew ;

Not less our duty and our pride
Forbid to leave unsought, untried,
The glories at our side.

What? shall the limner only paint
Blue hills with adumbrations faint,
Or misty aureoled saint,

And scorn to ponder flower or tree,
Ripe fields, child-faces, summer sea,
And all fair things that be ;

Nor care thro' passion's endless play,
Our living brethren to portray,
Who fare to doom to-day,

When the sun's finger deigns to trace
Each line and feature of man's face,
Its beauty and disgrace ?

Or shall the skilled musician dare
Only to sound some jocund air
Arcadian, free from care,

Round whom in strains that scorn control
The mighty diapasons roll,
That speak from soul to soul ;

Our mystical modern music deep,
Not piped by shepherds to their sheep,
But wrung from souls that weep ;

Where seldom melody is heard,
Nor simple woodland note of bird,
So deep a depth is stirred,

Such blended harmonies divine
Across the core of sweetness twine
As round the grape the vine ?

Or shall some false cold dream of art
Corrupt the voice and chill the heart,
And turn us from our part,

Blot out the precious lesson won
From all the ages past and done,
That bard and seer are one ?

Dull creed of earthy souls ! who tell
That, be the song of heaven or hell,
Who truly sings, sings well,

And with the same encomiums greet
The satyr baring brutish feet,
And pure child-angels sweet ;

Whose praise in equal meed can share
The Mænad with distempered hair,
The cold Madonna fair.

Great singers of the past ! whose song
Still streams down earthward pure and strong,
Free from all stain of wrong.

Whose lives were chequered, but whose verse
The generations still rehearse ;
Yet never soul grew worse.

What is it that these would ? shall I,
Born late in time, consent to lie
In the old misery ?

I—who have learnt that flesh is dust,
What gulfs dissever love from lust,
The wrongful from the just—

Put on again the rags of sense,
A Pagan without innocence,
A Christian in offence ?

Perish the thought ! I am to-day
What God and Time have made me ; they
Have ordered, I obey.

And day by day the labouring earth
Whirls on—glad mysteries of birth,
Sad death throes, sorrow, mirth,

Youth's flower just bursting into bloom,
Wan age, a sun which sets in gloom,
The cradle, and the tomb ;

These are around me—hope and fear,
Not fables, but alive and near,
Fresh smile and scarce-dried tear ;

These are around me, these I sing,
These, these of every thought and thing,
My verse shall heavenward wing.

The sun but seems to kiss the hill,
And all the vast eternal Will
Is moving, working, still.

God is, Truth lives, and overhead
Behold a visible glory spread ;
Only the past is dead.

Courage ! arise ; if hard it seem
To sing the present, yet we deem
'Tis worthier than a dream.

Awake, arise, for to the bold
The seeming desert comes to hold
Blossoms of white and gold.

* * * * *

Shall I then choose to take my side
With those who love their thoughts to hide
In vague abstractions wide ?

Whose dim verse struggles to recall
The hopes, the fears that rise and fall
Deep in the souls of all.

Who fitly choose a fitting theme.
Not things which neither are nor seem,
No visionary dream,

But the great psalm of life, the long
Harmonious confluence of song,
Thro' all the ages strong,

But grown to wider scale to-day,
And sweeping fuller chords than they
Knew who have passed away.

A worthy theme for worthy bard
But all too often blurred and marred
By intonations hard.

So that the common eye and ear
Can dimly see and faintly hear
What should be bright and clear.

Who wing the fiery thought so high,
An arrow shot into the sky,
Its failing forces die,

And all the straining eye discerns
Is but a spark which feebly burns,
Then quenched to earth returns.

Or with a borrowed lyre devote
Hoarse accent and untuneful throat
To sound a difficult note,

By currents of conflicting thought,
And counter themes which rise unsought,
And jangling chords distraught.

Not song, but science, sign not sound,
Not soaring to high heaven, but bound
Fast to the common ground.

Who with a pitiless skill dissect
What secret sources, vexed and checked,
Surge upward in effect,

And trace in endless struggling rhyme
How hearts forlorn of love and time
Have rotted into crime.

Or those who, baffled and oppress
By life's incessant fierce unrest,
Where naught that is seems best,

Assail the tyrant, lash the wrong,
Till but a wild invective long,
Is left in lieu of song.

Most precious all, yet this is sure,
The song which longest shall endure
Is simple, sweet, and pure.

Not psychologic riddles fine,
Not keen analysis, combine
In verse we feel divine.

Nor fierce o'erbalanced rage alone,
Which mars the rhyme, and dulls the tone—
They may not sing who groan ;

But a sweet cadence, wanting much
Of depth, perhaps, and fire, but such
As finer souls can touch,

To finer issues ; such as come
To him who far afield must roam,
Thinking old thoughts of home.

Or who in Sabbath twilights hears
His children lisp a hymn, and fears
Lest they should see his tears.

Wherefore, my soul, if song be thine,
If any gleam of things divine
Thro' thee may dimly shine,

If ever any faintest note
Of far-off sweetness swell thy throat,
True echo tho' remote,

This is my task, to sing To-day,
Not dead years past and fled away,
But this alone—To-day.

Or if I pause a little space
Striving, across the gulf, to trace
Some fine, forgotten face—

Some monarch of the race whose name
Still lives upon the lips of fame,
Touched by no stain of shame ;

Some sweet old love-tale, ever young,
Which of old time the burning tongue
Of god-like bard has sung ;

Some meed of effort nobly won,
Some more than human task begun,
Precious though left undone ;

Some awful story, strong to show
How passions unrestricted flow
 Into a sea of woe ;

Not less my powers I strive to bend,
Not less my song aspires to tend
 To one unchanging end,

By lofty aspirations, stirred
Thro' homely music, daily heard,
 Trite phrase and common word,

Simple, but holding at the core
Thoughts which strange speech and varied lore
 Have hid from men before.

To lift how little howsoe'er
The hearts of toilers struggling here,
 In joyless lives and sere.

To make a little lighter yet
Their lives by daily ills beset,
 Whom men and laws forget.

To sing, if sing I must, of love
As a pure spell, with power to move
 Dull hearts to things above.

But choosing rather to portray
The warring tides of thought which stray
Thro' doubting souls to-day.

Or if at times, with straining eye
And voice, I dwell on things which lie
Hidden in Futurity,

And strive to tell in halting rhyme
The glorious dawn, the golden prime,
The victories of Time,

The race transfigured, wrong redressed,
None worn with labour, nor oppressed,
But peace for all and rest,

And knowledge throwing wide the shrine
From whose broad doorways seems to shine
An effluence Divine ;—

If of these visions fain to dream,
Not less I hold, whate'er may seem,
The Present for my theme,

The vain regret remembering,
Which lost occasion knows to bring,—
Afraid, yet bound, to sing.

SONG.

AH ! love is like a tender flower
Hid in the opening leaves of life,
Which, when the springtide calls, has power
To scorn the elemental strife—
So strong, that well it knows to gain
Fresh sweetness from the wind and rain.

So strong, and yet so weak, alas !
It waits the wooing of the sun ;
'Mid frosts and snows the brief hours pass,
And when they melt the spring is done.
Gay blooms and honeyed fruits may come,
But spring is dead, and birds are dumb.

AS IN A PICTURE.

WHITE, on a cliff they stood ;
Beyond, a cypress wood.

Three there were—one who wept,
And one as though he slept ;

One with wide steadfast eyes
Fixed in a sad surprise.

Day, like a dying hymn,
Grew gradually dim.

A solitary star
Gleamed on them from afar.

Beneath, by sand and cave
Sobbed the continual wave.

Long time in reverent thought
Who these might be I sought,

Then suddenly I said,
“Oh, Lord of quick and dead!”



AT AN ALMSHOUSE.

BENEATH these shadows holy
Age rests, or paces slowly,
And muses, muses always
On that which once has been,
Recalling years long ended,
And vanished visions splendid ;
The throb, the flush of old days,
When all the world was green.

When every hour brought pleasure,
And every flower a treasure,
And whispered words were spoken,
And love was everywhere.
The swift brief hour of passion,
And then the old, old fashion,
The childish accents broken—
Oh, precious days and fair !

The years of self-denial,
Blissful tho' full of trial,
The young blooms waxing stronger.
The older come to fruit.
The tranquil days of gladness,
The gradual calm and sadness,
When childhood cheers no longer,
And all the house is mute.

Gone, but not wholly taken ;
Left, yet not all forsaken.
Again the worn hearts cherish
The memories of home ;
Again love-whispers greet them,
Their children run to meet them,
Blest dreams which never perish
Until the end be come.

A YORKSHIRE RIVER.

THE silent surfaces sleep
With a sullen viscous flow,
And scarce in the squalid deep
Swing the dead weeds to and fro,
And no living thing is there to swim or creep
In the sunless gulfs below.

And beneath are the ooze and the slime,
Where the corpse lies as it fell,
The hidden secrets of crime
Which no living tongue shall tell,
The shameful story of time,
The old, old burden of hell.

All the grasses upon the bank
Are bitter with scurf and drift,
And the reeds are withered and dank;
And sometimes, when the smoke clouds shift,
You may see the tall shafts in a hideous rank
Their sulphurous fumes uplift.

From the black blot up the stream
The funeral barges glide,
And the waves part as in a dream,
From broad bow and sunken side ;
And 'tis "greed, greed!" hisses from coal and from
steam,
Foul freightage and turbid tide,

Like the life of a slumb'ring soul
Grown dull in content and health,
Whose dark depths lazily roll,
Whose still currents creep by stealth.
Nor sorrow nor yearning comes to control
The monotonous tide of wealth.

Fair or foul, in life as in death,
One blight and corruption o'er all,
Blow on them, great wind, with thy breath,
Fall, blinding water-floods, fall,
Till the dead life below awakeneth,
And deep unto deep doth call !

FOR JUDGMENT.

THE form was young, the face was fair,
Her hands seemed still together tied,
'Twas as if Eve was standing there,
With the stern guardian at her side.

I mused on all the depths of will,
Of judgment, knowledge, right, and wrong.
The pleadings crept their course, and still
I sat in musings sad and long.

But when they ceased the tale of shame,
And the cold voice pronounced her name,
But one thought held me, that was all,
'Twas thus we did my sister call.

ODE ON A FAIR SPRING MORNING.

COME, friend, let us forget
The turmoil of the world a little while,
For now the soft skies smile,
The fields with flowers are set.
Let us away awhile
With fierce unrest and carking thoughts of care,
And breathe a little while the jocund air,
And sing the joyous measures sung
By those free singers, when the world was young.

For still the world is young, for still the spring
Renews itself, and still the lengthening hours
Bring back the month of flowers ;
The leaves are green to-day as those of old,
For Chaucer and for Shakspeare ; still the gold
Of August gilds the rippling breadths of wheat ;
Young maids are fair and sweet
As when they frolicked gay, with flashing feet,

Round the old May-pole. All young things rejoice.
No sorrow dulls the blackbird's mellow voice,
Thro' the clear summer dawns or twilights long.
With aspect not more dim
Thro' space the planets swim
Than of old time o'er the Chaldean plain.
We only, we alone,
Let jarring discords mar our song.
And find our music take a lower tone.
We only with dim eyes
And laboured vision feebly strain,
And flout the undying splendours of the skies.

Oh, see how glorious show,
On this fair morn in May, the clear-cut hills,
The dewy lawns, the hawthorns white,
Argent on plains of gold, the growing light
Pure as when first on the young earth
The faint warm sunlight came to birth.
There is a nameless air
Of sweet renewal over all which fills
The earth and sky with life, and everywhere,
Before the scarce seen sun begins to glow,
The birds awake which slumbered all night long,
And with a gush of song,
First doubting of their strain, then full and wide
Raise their fresh hymns thro' all the country side ;

Already, above the dewy clover,
The soaring lark begins to hover
Over his mate's low nest ;
And soon, from childhood's early rest
In hall and cottage, to the casement rise
The little ones with their fresh morning eyes.
And gaze on the old Earth, which still grows new,
And see the tranquil heaven's unclouded blue,
And, since as yet no sight nor sound of toil
The fair spread, peaceful picture comes to soil,
Look from their young and steadfast eyes
With such an artless sweet surprise
As Adam knew, when first on either hand
He saw the virgin landscapes of the morning land

Oh, youth, dawn, springtide, triune miracle,
Renewing life in earth, and sky, and man,
By what eternal plan
Dost thou revive again and yet again?
There is no morn that breaks,
No bud that bursts, no life that comes to birth,
But the rapt fancy takes,
Far from the duller plains of mind and earth,
Up to the source and origin of things,
Where, poised on brooding wings,
It seems to hover o'er the immense inane,
And see the suns, like feeble rings of light,
Orb from the gray, and all the youngling globe

A coil of vapour circling like a dream,
Then fixed compact for ever ; the first beam
Strike on the dark and undivided sea,
And wake the deeps with life. Oh, mystery
That still dost baffle thought,
Though by all sages sought,
And yet art daily done
With each returning sun,
With every dawn which reddens in the skies,
With every opening of awakened eyes !

How shall any dare to hold
That the fair world groweth old,
And now hath spent on time
The glories of its prime?
Beautiful were the days indeed
Of the Pagan's simple creed,
When all of life was made for girl and boy,
And all religion was but to enjoy ;
The fair chivalric dream
To some may glorious seem,
When from the sleeping centuries,
Awakened Europe seemed to rise ;
It may be that we cannot know,
In these ripe years, the glory and the glow
Of those young hours of time, and careless days,
Borne down too much by knowledge, and oppress,
To halt a little for the needed rest,

And yield ourselves awhile to joy and praise ;
Yet every year doth bring
With each recurrence of the genial hour
The infancy of spring,
With store of tender leaf and bursting flower,
And still to every home
Fresh childish voices come,
And eyes that opened last in Paradise,
And with each rosy dawn
Are night and death withdrawn ;
Another world rises for other eyes ;
Again begins the joy, the stress, the strife,
Ancient as time itself, and wide as life.

We are the ancients of the world indeed ;
No more the simple creed,
When every hill and stream and grove
Was filled with shy divinities of love,
Allures us, serving as our King
A Lord of grief and suffering.
Too much our wisdom burdens to permit
The fair, thin visions of the past, to flit
From shade to shade, or float from hill to hill
We are so compassed round by ill,
That all the music of our lives is dumb,
Amid the turbulent waves of sound that rise,
The discord born of doubts, and tears, and sighs,
Which daily to the listening ear do come ;

Nay, oft, confounded by the incessant noise
Of vast world-engines; grinding law on law,
We lose the godhead that our fathers saw,
And all our higher joys,
And bear to plod on daily, deaf and blind,
To a dark goal we dare not hope to find.

But grows the world then old?
Nay, all things that are born of time
Spring upwards, and expand from youth to prime,
Spring up from flower to fruit,
From song-tide till the days are mute,
Green blade to ear of gold.
But not the less through the eternal round
The sleep of winter wakes in days of spring,
And not the less the bare and frozen ground
Grows blithe with blooms that burst and birds that
sing.

Nature is deathless; herb and tree,
Through time that has been and shall be,
Change not, although the outward form
Seem now the columned palm
Nourished in zones of calm,
And now the gnarled oak that defies the storm.
The cedar's thousand summers are no more
To her than are the fleeting petals gay
Which the young spring, ere March is o'er,
Scarce offered, takes away.

Eternal are her works. Unchanging she,
Alike in short-lived flower and ever-changing sea.

We, too, are deathless ; we,
Eternal as the Earth,
We cannot cease to be
While springtide comes or birth.
If our being cease to hold
Reflected lights divine
On budding lives, they day by day do shine
With unabated gold.
Though lost it may be to our mortal sight,
It cannot be that any perish quite—
Only the baser part forgets to be.
And if within the hidden Treasury
Of the great Ruler we awhile should rest,
Or issue with a higher stamp imprest,
With all our baser alloy purged and spent,
Were we not thus content ?

Our thoughts too mighty are
To be within our span of years confined,
Too deep and wide and far,
The hopes, the fears, that crowd the labouring mind,
The sorrows that oppress,
The sanctities that bless,
Are vaster than this petty stage of things.
The soaring fancy mounts on easy wings
Beyond the glimmer of the furthest star.

The watcher who with patient eye
Scans the illumined sky,
Knows when the outward rushing fire shall turn,
And in far ages hence shall brightly burn
For eyes to-day undreamt of. The clear voice
From Greece or Israel thro' the centuries heard
Still bids us tremble or rejoice,
Stronger than living look or word ;
The love of home or race,
Which doth transfigure us, and seems to bring
On every heaven-lit face
Some shadow of the glory of our King,
Fades not on earth, nor with our years doth end ;
Nay, even earth's poor physical powers transcend
The narrow bounds of space and time,
The swift thought by some mystic sympathy
Speeding through desert sand, and storm-tost sea.
And shall we hold the range of mind
Is to our little lives confined ;
That the pure heart in some blest sphere above,
Loves not which here was set on fire of love ;
The clear eye scans not still, which here could scan
The confines of the Universal plan ;
The seer nor speaks nor thinks his thoughts sublime,
And all of Homer is a speck of lime ?

Nay, friend, let us forget
The conflicts of our doubt a little while,
Again our springs shall smile ;

We shall not perish yet.
If God so guide our fate,
The nobler portions of ourselves shall last
Till all the lower rounds of life be past,
And we, regenerate.
We too again shall rise,
The same and not the same,
As daily rise upon the orient skies
New dawns with wheels of flame.
So, if it worthy prove,
Our being, self-perfected, shall upward move
To higher essence, and still higher grown,
Not sweeping idle harps before a throne,
Nor spending praise where is no need of praise,
But through unnumbered lives and ages come
From pure laborious days,
To an eternal home,
Where spring is not, nor birth, nor any dawn,
But life's full noontide never is withdrawn.



LOVE TRIUMPHANT.

Love took me up, a naked, helpless child,
Love laid me sleeping on the tender breast,
Love gazed on me with saintly eyes and mild,
Love watched me as I lay in happy rest,
Love was my childhood's stay, my chiefest good,
My daily friend, my solace and my food.

But when to Love's own stature I was come,
Treading the paths where fabled Loves abound,
Hard by the Cytherean's magic home,
Loveless I paced alone the enchanted ground.
Some phantoms pale I marked, which fled away,
And lo, my youth was gone ; my hair turned gray.

Loveless I lived long time, until I knew
A thrill since childish hours unknown before,
My cloistered heart forth to the wicket flew,
And Love himself was waiting at the door.
And now, howe'er the treacherous seasons move,
Love dwells with me again, and I with Love.

Love folds me round, Love walks with me, Love takes
My heart and burns it with a holy fire ;
Love lays me on his silver wings, and makes
My fainting soul to thinner air aspire.
Love of the Source, the Race, the True, the Right,
This is my sole companion day and night.



TOLERANCE.

CALL no faith false which e'er has brought
Relief to any laden life,
Cessation from the pain of thought,
Refreshment 'mid the dust of strife.

What though the thing to which they kneel
Be dumb and dead as wood or stone,
Though all the rapture which they feel
Be for the worshipper alone ?

They worship, they adore, they bow
Before the Ineffable Source, before
The hidden soul of good ; and thou,
With all thy wit, what dost thou more ?

Kneel with them, only if there come
Some zealot or sleek knave who strives
To mar the sanctities of home,
To tear asunder wedded lives ;

Or who by subtle wile has sought,
By shameful promise, shameful threat,
To turn the thinker from his thought,
To efface the eternal landmarks set,

'Twixt faith and knowledge ; hold not peace
For such, but like a sudden flame
Let loose thy scorn on him, nor cease
Till thou has covered him with shame.



A HYMN IN TIME OF IDOLS.

THOUGH they may crowd
Rite upon rite, and mystic song on song ;
Though the deep organ loud
Through the long nave reverberate full and strong ;
Though the weird priest,
Whom rolling clouds of incense half conceal,
By gilded robes increased, '
Mutter and sign, and proudly prostrate kneel ;
Not pomp, nor song, nor bended knee
Shall bring them any nearer Thee.

I would not hold
Therefore that those who worship still where they,
In dear dead days of old,
Their distant sires, knelt once and passed away,
May not from carven stone,
High arching nave and reeded column fine,
And the thin soaring tone

Of the keen organ catch a breath divine,
Or that the immemorial sense
Of worship adds not reverence.

But by some bare
Hill side or plain, or crowded city street,
Wherever purer spirits are,
Or hearts with love inflamed together meet,
Rude bench and naked wall,
Humble and sordid to the world-dimmed sight,
On these shall come to fall
A golden ray of consecrating light,
And thou within the midst shalt there
Invisible receive the prayer.

In every home,
Wherever there are loving hearts and mild,
Thou still dost deign to come,
Clothed with the likeness of a little child ;
Upon the hearth thou still
Dwellest with them at meat, or work, or play ;
Thou who all space dost fill
Art with the pure and humble day by day ;
Thou treasurest the tears they weep,
And watchest o'er them while they sleep.

Spirit and Word !
That still art hid in every faithful heart,

Indwelling Thought and Lord—
How should they doubt who know thee as thou art?
How think to bring thee near
By magic words, or signs, or any spell,
Who art among us here,
Who always in the loving soul dost dwell,
Who art the staff and stay indeed
Of the weak knees and hands that bleed?

Then let them take
Their pagan trappings, and their lifeless lore ;
Let us arise and make
A worthy temple where was none before.
Each soul is its own shrine,
Its priesthood, its sufficient sacrifice,
Its cleansing fount divine,
Its hidden store of precious sanctities.
Those only fit for priestcraft are
From whom their Lord and King is far.

ON A MODERN PAINTED WINDOW.

TIME was they lifted thee so high
Between the gazer and the sky,
That all the worshipper might see
Was God no more, but only thee.

So high was set thy cross, that they
Who would thy every thought obey,
Saw not thy gracious face, nor heard
More than an echo of thy word.

But now 'tis nearer to the ground,
The weeping women kneel around,
The scoffers sneering by, deride
Thy kingly claims, thy wounded side.

Only two beams of common wood,
And a meek victim bathed in blood,
Rude nails that pierce the tortured limb,
Mild eyes with agony grown dim.

Aye, but to those who know thee right
Faith strengthens with the nearer sight ;
Love builds a deeper, stronger, creed
On those soft eyes and hands that bleed.

Raised but a little from the rest,
But higher therefore and more blest ;
No more an empty priestly sign,
But the more human, more divine.



A MIDSUMMER NIGHT.

THE long day wanes, the broad fields fade ; the night,
The sweet June night, is like a curtain drawn.
The dark lanes know no faintest sound, and white
The pallid hawthorn lights the smooth-pleached lawn.
The scented earth drinks from the silent skies
Soft dews, more sweet than softest harmonies.

There is no stir nor breath of air, the plains
Lie slumbering in the close embrace of night,
Only the rustling landrail's note complains ;
The children's casement shows the half-veiled light,
Only beneath the solemn elm trees tall
The fountain seems to fall and cease to fall.

No change will come, nor any sound be made
Thro' the still hours which shall precede the day ;
Only the bright-eyed stars will slowly fade,
And a thin vapour rise up cold and gray,
Then a soft breeze will whisper fresh and cold,
And up the swift sun hurries red as gold.

And then another dawn, another link
To bind the coming to the vanished day,
Another foot-pace nearer to the brink
Whereon our perilous footsteps hardly stay,
Another line upon the secular page
Of birth-throes, bridals, sick-beds, youth and age.

Sweet summer night, than summer days more fair,
Safe haven of the weary and forlorn,
Splendid the gifts the luminous noontides bear,
Lovely the opening eyelids of the morn ;
But thou with softest touch transfigurest
This toilworn earth into a heaven of rest.

GOOD IN EVERYTHING.

THE white shafts of the dawn dispel
The night clouds banked across the sky ;
The sluggish vapours curl and die,
And the day rises. It is well.

Unfold, ye tender blooms of life ;
Sing, birds ; let all the world be gay :
'Tis well,—the morning of our day
Must rise 'mid joyous songs and strife.

Beat, noonday sun, till all the plain
Swoons, and life seems asleep or dead :
'Tis well,—the harvest of our bread
Is sown in sorrow and reaped in pain.

Close, evening shadows, soft and deep,
When life reviving breathes once more ;
Fall, silent night, when toil is o'er,
And the soul folds her wings in sleep.

Come joy or grief, come right or wrong,
In good or evil, life or death ;
We are the creatures of His breath :
Nor shall his hand forsake us long.

THE REPLY.

IF I were to answer you
As you would, my soul would soar
Like the lark from earth-born eyes,
Soar and hide in far-off skies,
Soar and come to mortal view
Nevermore.

Whatsoever chance befall,
Of myself I'd die possess.
If they hold a willing mind
Silken threads like steel can bind.
Only to be free is blest—
Free is all.

Press me not, of earth am I ;
Paths there are I dare not tread.
Sweet are fields and flowers, the smile
Of girlhood ; but a little while
Blossoms youth, and overhead
Laughs the sky.

What have we to do with love,—
We for whom the seasons bring
Nothing else than golden hours,
Sun that burns, nor cloud that lowers,
Thro' whose veins the tides of spring
Lightly move?

But if any pain should come
To o'ercloud your summer, dear,
Pain another's heart may share,
Come and we our fate will dare,—
Come, forgetting doubt and fear,
To your home.

THE TOUCHSTONE.

SAID one, "'Tis Use must lend
The clue our thoughts to bend
To the true end."

Then I. "But can your thought
Reach thus for ages sought,
The eternal 'Ought?'"

"Would not the martyr spurn
The truth you teach, to learn,
Rot, rather,—burn?"

"Were not death's self more sweet
Than to live incomplete
A life effete?"

Then he. "But who shall hold
They grasped not over bold
Their faith of old,"

“ Hoarding a random creed
For which they bore to bleed,
Not proved indeed ? ”

“ For who the truth shall seize
Grasps it by slow degrees,
Not snatched, as these.”

“ And who would save his kind
Must spend, the clue to find,
Not heart, but mind.”

Then I. “ But mind alone,
Is dead as wood or stone,
Stirs naught and none.”

“ And who with prying eyes
Will motive analyze,
For him it dies.”

“ And all his hours remain
A barren, endless plain,
Not joy nor pain : ”

“ A tideless, windless sea,
A blank eternity,
Still doomed to be.”

Then he. "The Use we teach
All forms of being can reach,
Saves all by each."

"No hasty glance or blind,
To passing goods confined,
Changeful as wind ;"

"But with a steadfast view,
Piercing the boundless blue,
Up to the True,"

"Contented to efface
Self, if from out its place
Blossoms the race ;"

"If from lives crushed and wrecked,
A perfected effect,
Man stands erect."

"To whom all pleasures show
An aspect mean and low
Beside to know."

"Holding all other thought
Than which for this is sought
A thing of naught."

“ This seeking, nothing less,
What broader happiness
Most lives may bless ? ”

Then I. “ If the desire
To which your thoughts aspire
Blazed forth afire ; ”

“ If all the task were done,
All stubborn contests won
Beneath the sun ; ”

“ If hope came not to cheer,
Nor bracing chill of fear,
Sweet sigh nor tear ; ”

“ But all the race should sleep
In a broad calm, too deep
For one to weep. ”

“ And o'er all lands should reign
A dull content inane,
Worse far than pain ; ”

“ If, all its griefs forgot,
Slowly the race should rot,
Fade and be not ; ”

“Would not the thought oppress
The dream that once could bless,
With such distress,”

“That, from the too great strain,
Life withered, heart and brain,
Would rise in vain?”

Then he. “The outcome this
Of all philosophies,
‘Who seeks shall miss.’”

“Who toil aright, for those
Life’s pathway, ere it close,
Is as the rose.”

“The spires of wisdom stand
Piled by the unconscious hand,
From grains of sand.”

“And pleasure comes unsought,
To those who take but thought
For that, they ought;”

“A bloom, a perfume rare,
A deep-hid jewel fair
For those who dare.”

“ So who the race aright
Loveth, a clearer sight
Shall yet requite ; ”

“ And, since he seeks it less,
An unsought happiness
His toil shall bless.”

Then I. “ ’Twere strange indeed
Should not our longing need
A clearer creed.”

“ If only this were blest,
To ponder well how best
To serve the rest.”

“ Since grows ; ’tis understood,
The happy multitude,
From each man’s good,”

“ From general sacrifice,
How should for each arise,
Content for sighs ? ”

“ Or shall we deem it true
That who the road pursue
To gain the True,”

“ May not the summit gain
By paths direct and plain
To heart and brain,”

“ But with averted mind,
And sedulously blind,
The end must find ? ”

“ Is truth a masker, then,
Rejoiced to mock the ken
Of toiling men ? ”

“ Now tricked as Use, now Right,
But always in despite
Of our poor sight.”

“ Doth it not rather seem
We live, whate'er we deem,
As in a dream,”

“ Acting, but acting still
The dictates to fulfil
Of a sure Will,”

“ Seeing in Use and Right,
Twin rays indefinite
Of a great Light,”

“A mystic Sun and clear,
Which through mind’s atmosphere
Can scarce appear,”

“But which not less we know ;
In all fair flowers that grow,
Loud storms that blow,”

“In noble thought and word,
In aspirations heard,
When hearts are stirred,”

“In every breathing breath,
Life that awakeneth,
Life that is death,”

“Whether serene it shine
Or clouds our view confine,
Wondrous, Divine ?”

Then he. “Shall this excuse
Him who a dream should choose
Rather than Use,”

“That he prefer to hold
Some dark abstraction old,
Remote and cold,”

“Some thin ghost, fancy-dressed,
Whereby men’s souls oppressed,
Forfeit the best,”

“And for a dream neglect
What splendours of effect
Their lives had decked?”

Then I. “Though mind and brain
Wither and are in vain,
And thought a pain;”

“Though sorrow, like a thief,
Follow to rob belief,
And faith be grief;”

“Though my obedience show
No fruit I here may know
Save utter woe;”

“Though health and strength decay;
Yea, though the Truth shall slay,
I will obey.”

NOTHING LOST.

WHERE are last year's snow:
Where the summer's rose,—
Who is there who knows?

Or the glorious note
Of some singer's throat,
Heard in years remote?

Or the love they bore
Who, in days of yore,
Loved, but are no more?

Or the faiths men knew
When, before mind grew,
All strange things seemed true?

* * * *

The snows are sweet spring rain,
The dead rose blooms again,
Young voices keep the strain.

The old affection mild
Still springs up undefiled
For love, and friend, and child.

The old faiths grown more wide,
Purer and glorified,
Are still our lifelong guide.

Nothing that once has been,
Tho' ages roll between
And it be no more seen,

Can perish, for the Will
Which doth our being fulfil,
Sustains and keeps it still.



THE HIDDEN SELF.

I KNOW not if a keener smart
Can come to finer souls than his
Who hears men praise him, mind or heart,
For something higher than he is.

Who fain would say, "Behold me, friends,
That which I am, not what you deem,
A thing of low and narrow ends,
Sordid, not golden as I seem.

See here the hidden blot of shame,
The weak thought that you take for strong,
The brain too dull to merit fame,
The faint and imitative song."

But dares not, lest discovery foul
Not his name only, but degrade
Heights closed but to the soaring soul,
Names which scorn trembles to invade ;

And doth his inner self conceal
From all men in his own despite,
Hiding what he would fain reveal,
And a most innocent hypocrite.

MARCHING.

ONCE, and once again,
From the thick crowd of men,
Loud toil and high endeavour,
There comes a secret sound,
Where the thinkers stand around,
And sometimes 'tis "For ever,"
Sometimes "Never."

Always that ceaseless throng
Has filed those paths along,
Those painful hills ascended ;
Thro' fair meads of success,
Thro' barren sands they press,
Defeats and triumphs splendid,
Till 'tis ended.

The glory and the shame
Different, and yet the same
The efforts and the aspirations,

Unlike in mien and speech,
Pressed onwards each on each,
Go the endless alternations
Of the nations.

And the rhythm of their feet,
The ineffable low beat
Of those vast throngs pacing slowly,
Floats on the sea of Time
Like a musical low chime
From a far isle, mystic, holy,
Tolling slowly.

And from the endless column
Goes up that strange rhyme solemn
Of thoughts which naught shall sever,
The contrast sad and sweet,
Of opposite streams which meet ;
Sometimes the glad "For ever,"
Sometimes "Never."

COURAGE !

THERE are who, bending supple knees
Live for no end except to please,
Rising to fame by mean degrees ;
But creep not thou with these.

They have their due reward ; they bend
Their lives to an unworthy end—
On empty aims the toil expend
Which had secured a friend.

But be not thou as these, whose mind
Is to the passing hour confined ;
Let no ignoble fetters bind
Thy soul, as free as wind.

Stand upright, speak thy thought, declare
The truth thou hast that all may share ;
Be bold, proclaim it everywhere :
They only live who dare.

GILBERT BECKETT AND THE FAIR
SARACEN.

THE last crusader's helm had gleamed
Upon the yellow Syrian shore ;
No more the war-worn standards streamed,
The stout knights charged and fell no more ;
No more the Paynim grew afraid—
The crescent floated o'er the cross.
But to one simple Heathen maid
Her country's gain was bitter loss ;

For love, which knows not race or creed,
Had bound her with its subtle chain,—
Love, which still makes young hearts to bleed,
For this one, mingled joy with pain,
And left for one brief hour of bliss,
One little span of hopes and fears,
The memory of a parting kiss,
And what poor solace comes of tears.

A lowly English squire was he,
 A prisoner chained, enslaved, and sold ;
 A lady she of high degree.

'Tis an old tale and often told :
 'Twas pity bade the brown cheek glow,
 'Twas love and pity drew the sigh,
 'Twas love that made the soft tear flow,
 The sweet sad night she bade him fly.

Far from the scorching Syrian plain
 The brave ship bears the Saxon home ;
 Once more to mists and rains again,
 And verdant English lawns, they come.
 I know not if as now 'twas then,
 Or if the growing ages move
 The careless, changeful hearts of men
 More slowly to the thoughts of love ;

But woman's heart was then, as now,
 Tender and passionate and true.
 Think, gentle ladies, ye who know
 Love's power, what pain that poor heart knew
 How, living always o'er again
 The sweet short past, she knew, too late,
 'Twas love had bound the captive's chain,
 Which broken, left her desolate.

Till by degrees the full young cheek
Grew hollow, and the liquid eyes
Still gazing seaward, large and meek,
Took something of a sad surprise ;
As one who learns, with a strange chill,
'Mid youth and wealth's unclouded day,
Of sad lives full of pain and ill,
And thinks, "And am I too as they?"

And by degrees most hateful grew
All things that once she held so dear—
The feathery palms, the cloudless blue,
Tall mosque and loud muezzin clear,
'The knights who flashed by blinded street,
The lattice lit by laughing eyes,
The songs around the fountain, sweet
To maidens under Eastern skies.

And oft at eve, when young girls told
Tales precious to the girlish heart,
She sat alone, and loved to hold
Communion with her soul apart.
Till at the last, too great became
The hidden weight of secret care,
And girlish fears and maiden shame
Were gone, and only love was there.

And so she fled. I see her still
In fancy, desolate, alone,
Wander by arid plain and hill,
From early dawn till day was done ;
Sun-stricken, hungry, thirsty, faint,
By perilous paths I see her move,
Clothed round with pureness like a saint,
And fearless in the might of love.

Till lo ! a gleam of azure sea,
And rude ships moored upon the shore.
Strange, yet not wholly strange, for he
Had dared those mystic depths before.
And some good English seaman bold
Remembering those he left at home,
Put gently back the offered gold,
And for love's honour bade her come.

And then they sailed. No pirate bark
Swooped on them, for the Power of Love
Watched o'er that precious wandering ark,
And this his tender little dove.
I see those stalwart seamen still
Gaze wondering on that childish form,
And shelter her from harm and ill,
And guide her safe through wave and storm.

Till under grayer skies a gleam
Of white, and taking land she went,
Following our broad imperial stream,
Or rose-hung lanes of smiling Kent.
Friendless I see her, lonely, weak,
Thro' fields where every flower was strange,
Go forth without a word to speak,
By burgh and thorp and moated grange.

For all that Love himself could teach
This passionate pilgrim to our shore,
Were but two words of Saxon speech,
Two little words and nothing more—
“Gilbert” and “London”; like a flame
To her sweet lips these sounds would come,
The syllables of her lover's name,
And the far city of his home.

I see her cool her weary feet
In dewy depths of crested grass;
By clear brooks fringed with meadow-sweet,
And daisied meads, I see her pass;
I see her innocent girlish glee,
I see the doubts which on her crowd,
O'erjoyed with bird, or flower, or tree,
Despondent for the fleeting cloud.

I see her passing slow, alone,
By burgh and thorp and moated grange,
Still murmuring softly like a moan
Those two brief words in accents strange.
Sometimes would pass a belted earl
With squires behind in brave array ;
Sometimes some honest, toilworn churl
Would fare with her till close of day.

The saintly abbess, sweet and sage,
Would wonder as she ambled by,
Or white-plumed knight or long-haired page
Ride by her with inquiring eye.
The friar would cross himself, and say
His paternosters o'er and o'er ;
The gay dames whisper Welladay !
And pity her and nothing more.

But tender women, knowing love
And all the pain of loneliness,
Would feel a sweet compassion move,
And welcome her to rest and food,
And walk with her beyond the hill,
And kiss her cheek when she must go
And " Gilbert " she would murmur still,
And " London " she would whisper low.

And sometimes sottish boors would rise
From wayside tavern, where they sate,
And leer from heated vinous eyes,
And stagger forth with reeling gait,
And from that strong unswerving will
And clear gaze shrink as from a blow ;
And " Gilbert " she would murmur still,
And " London " she would whisper low.

Then by the broad suburban street,
And city groups that outward stray
To take the evening, and the sweet
Faint breathings of the dying day—
The gay young 'prentice, lithe and slim,
The wimpled maid, demurely shy,
The merchant somewhat grave and prim,
The courtier with his rolling eye.

And more and more the growing crowd
Would gather, wondering whence she came
And why, with boorish laughter loud,
And jeers which burnt her cheek with flame.
For potent charm to save from ill
But one word she made answer now :
For " Gilbert " she would murmur still,
And " Gilbert " she would whisper low.

Till some good pitiful soul—not then
 Our London was as now o'ergrown—
 Pressed through the idle throng of men,
 And led her to his home alone,
 And signing to her he would find
 Him whom she sought, went forth again,
 And left her there with heart and mind
 Distracted by a new-born pain.

For surely then, when doubt was o'er,
 A doubt before a stranger came,
 "He loved me not, or loves no more."
 Oh, virgin pride ! oh, maiden shame !
 Almost she fled, almost the past
 Seemed better than the pain she knew ;
 Her veil around her face she cast :
 Then the gate swung—and he was true.

Poor child ! they christened her, and so
 She had her wish. Ah, yearning heart,
 Was love so sweet then ? would you know
 Again the longing and the smart ?
 Came there no wintry hours when you
 Longed for your native skies again,
 The creed, the tongue your girlhood knew,
 Aye, even the longing and the pain ?

Peace ! Love is Lord of all. But I,
Seeing her fierce son's mitred tomb,
Conjoin with fancy's dreaming eye
This love tale, and that dreadful doom.
Sped hither by a hidden will,
O'er sea and land I watch her go ;
" Gilbert " I hear her murmur still,
And " London " still she whispers low.

TO A CHILD OF FANCY.

THE nests are in the hedgerows,
The lambs are on the grass ;
With laughter sweet as music
Thy hours lightfooted pass,
My darling child of fancy,
My winsome prattling lass

Blue eyes, with long brown lashes,
Thickets of golden curl,
Red little lips disclosing
Twin rows of fairy pearl,
Cheeks like the apple blossom,
Voice lightsome as the merle.

A whole Spring's fickle changes
In every short-lived day,
A passing cloud of April,
A flowery smile of May,
A thousand quick mutations
From graver moods to gay.

Far off, I see the season
When thy childhood's course is run,
And thy girlhood opens wider
Beneath the growing sun,
And the rose begins to redden,
But the violets are done.

And further still the summer,
When thy fair tree, fully grown,
Shall burgeon, and grow splendid
With blossoms of its own,
And the fruit begins to gather,
But the buttercups are mown.

If I should see thy autumn,
'Twill not be close at hand,
But with a spirit vision,
From some far distant land.
Or, perhaps, I hence may see thee
Amongst the angels stand.

I know not what of fortune
The future holds for thee,
Nor if skies fair or clouded
Wait thee in days to be,
But neither joy nor sorrow
Shall sever thee from me.

Dear child, whatever changes
Across our lives may pass,
I shall see thee still for ever,
Clearly as in a glass,
The same sweet child of fancy,
The same dear winsome lass. .

A CYNIC'S DAY-DREAM.

SOME men there be who can descry
No charm in earth or sea or sky,
Poor painful bigot souls, to whom
All sights and sounds recall the tomb,
And some who do not fear to use
God's world for tavern or for stews.
Some think it wisdom to despoil
Their years for gold and troublous toil ;
While others with cold dreams of art
Would feed the hunger of the heart,
And dilettanti dare to stand,
Eternities on either hand !

But with no one of these shall I
Make choice to live my life or die,—
Rather let me elect to give
What span of life is mine to live,
To honest labour, daily sought,
Crowned with the meed of patient thought ;
To precious friends for ages dead,

But loved where'er their words are read ;
To others living with us still,
Who sway the nation's mind and will
By eloquent pen or burning word,
Where hearts are fired and souls are stirred.
So thro' the tranquil evenings long,
Let us awake our souls with song,
Such song as comes where no words come,
And is most mighty when most dumb.
Then soar awhile on wings of art ;
Not that which chokes the vulgar mart,
But subtle hints and fancies fine,
When least completed most divine,—
Sun-copies of some perfect thought,
Thro' bronze or canvas fitly wrought,
Known when in youth 'twas ours to see
Thy treasure-houses, Italy !
Then turn from these to grave debate
What change of laws befits the State,
By what wise schemes and precepts best
To raise the humble and oppressed,
And slay the twin reproach of Time,
The fiends of Ignorance and Crime.

Or what if I might come to fill
A calmer part, and dearer still,
With one attempered soul to share
The joys and ills 'tis ours to bear ;

To grow together, heart with heart,
Into a whole where each is part ;
To blend together, soul with soul,
Neither a part, but each the whole ;
With strange creative thrills to teach
The dawning mind, the growing speech,
To bind around me precious bands
Of loving hearts and childish hands,
And lose the stains of time and sense
In those clear deeps of innocence ?

So if kind fate should grant at length,
Ere frame and brain have lost their strength,
In my own country homestead dear,
To spend a portion of the year ;
What joys were ours if modest wealth
Should come with still unbroken health !
There, sheltered from the ruder wind,
Thro' the thick woods we'll range, to find
The spring's first flower, the autumn's fruit,
Strange fungus or misshapen root.
Mark where the wood-quist or the thrush
Builds on tall pine or hazel bush ;
See the brave bird with speckled breast
Brood fearless on the teeming nest,
And bid the little hands refrain
From every act of wrong and pain.
Observe the gossip conies sit

By their own doors, the white owl flit
Thro' the dim fields, and still enjoy
The wondering talk of girl or boy.
Sweet souls, which at life's portal stand,
And all within, a wonderland—
Oh, treasure of a guileless love,
Fit prelude of the joys above

There, when the swift week nears its end,
To greet the welcome Sunday friend,
Through the still fields we'll wend our way,
To meet the guest at close of day.
And then, when little eyes in vain
Long time have sought the coming train,
A gradual distant sound, which fills
The bosom of the folded hills,
Till with white steam or ruddy light
The wayworn convoy leaps to sight,
Then stops and sets the traveller down,
Bringing the smoke and news of town.
And then the happy hours to come,
The walk or ride which leads us home,
Past the tall woods through which 'twould seem
Home's white walls hospitably gleam,—
The well-served meal, the neighbour guest,
The rosy darlings curled and dressed ;
And, when the house grows silent, then
The lengthened talk on books and men ;

And on the Sunday morning still,
The pleasant stroll by wood-crowned hill
To church, wherein my eyes grow dim
Hearing my children chant the hymn ;
And seeing in their earnest look
Something of innocent rebuke,
I lose the old doubt's endless pain,
And am a little child again.

If fate should grant me such a home,
So sweet the tranquil days would come,
I should not need, I trust, to sink
My weariness in lust or drink.
Scant pleasure should I think to gain
From endless scenes of death and pain ;
'Twould little profit me to slay
A thousand innocents a day ;
I should not much delight to tear
With wolfish dogs the shrieking hare ;
With horse and hound to track to death
A helpless wretch that gasps for breath ;
To make the fair bird check its wing,
And drop, a dying, shapeless thing ;
To leave the joy of all the wood
A mangled heap of fur and blood,
Or else escaping, but in vain,
To pine, a shattered wretch, in pain ;
Teeming, perhaps, or doomed to see
Its young brood starve in misery ;

With neither risk nor labour, still
To live for nothing but to kill—
I dare not ! If perplexed I am
Between the tiger and the lamb ;
If fate ordain that these shall give
Their poor brief lives that I may live ;
Whate'er the law that bids them die,
Others shall butcher them, not I,—
Not such my work. Surely the Lord,
Who made the devils by a word,
Not men, but those who'd wield them well.
Gave these sad tortures of his Hell.

Ah ! fool and blind, to wander so ;
Who hast lived long enough to know
With what insane confusions teem
The mazes of our waking dream,—
The dullard surfeited with gold
His bloated coffers fail to hold,
While the keen mind and generous brain
From penury aspire in vain ;
Love's choicest treasures flung away
On some vile lump of coarsest clay ;
Pure girlhood chained to wretches foul,
Tainted in body as in soul ;
The precious love of wife or child
Not for the loving heart and mild,
But for the sullen churl, who ne'er

Knew any rule but that of fear ;
Fame, like Titania, stooping down
To set on asses' ears a crown ;
The shallow dunce, the fluent fool,
The butt and laughter of the school,
By fortune's strange caprice grown great,
A light of forum or debate ;
The carnal lump devoid of grace,
With each bad passion in his face,
A saintly idol, round whose knees
Crowd throngs of burning devotees.

Great heaven ! how strange the tangle is !
What old perplexity is this ?
The very words of my complaint,
What else are they than echoes faint
Of the full fire, the passionate scorn,
Of high-souled singers and forlorn,
Who, in our younger England, knew
No care for aught but what was true,
But loved to lash with bitter hate
The shameless vices of the great ;
Who bade, in far-off days of Rome,
In verse their indignation come ;
Who, when we learn the secrets hid
Beneath the eldest Pyramid,
Or in those dim days further still,
Whose nameless ruin builds the hill,

Push back our search where'er we can,
Till first the ape became the man,
Will in rude satire bid us find
The earliest victories of mind ?
Strong souls, rebellious with their lot,
Who longed for right and found it not ;
Too strong to take things as they seem,
Too weak to comprehend the scheme,
Too deeply fired with honest trust
To dream that God might be unjust ;
Yet, seeing how unequal show
His seeming measures here below,
By paradoxes girt about,
Grew thro' excess of faith to doubt.
Oh, faithful souls, who love the true,
Tho' all be false, yet will not you ;
Tho' wrong shall overcome the right,
Still is it hateful in your sight ;
Tho' sorely tempted, you, and tried,
The truth stands always at your side ;
Tho' falsehood wear her blandest smile,
You only she shall ne'er beguile ;
For you, 'mid spectral sights and shows,
Life blushes with a hidden rose ;
Thro' the loud din of lower things
You hear the sweep of angel wings,
And with a holy scorn possest,
Wait till these clamours sink to rest.

TO A LOST LOVE.

COLD snowdrops which the shrinking new-born year

Sends like the dove from out the storm-tost ark ;

Sweet violets which may not tarry here

Beyond the earliest flutings of the lark ;

Bright celandines which dot the tufted brake

Before the speckled thrush her nest has made ;

Fair frail anemones which star-like shake

And twinkle by each sunny bank and glade ;

Pale primroses wherewith the virgin spring,

As with a garland, binds her comely head ;

No eyes have I for you, nor voice to sing.

My love is dead !

For she was young and pure and white as you,

And fairer and more sweet, and ah ! as frail.

I dare not give to her the honour due,

Lest, for a strain so high, my voice should fail.

Like you, she knew the springtide's changeful hours ;
Like you, she blossomed ere the coming leaf ;
Like you, she knew not summer's teeming showers ;
Like you, as comely, and, alas ! as brief.

You may not see the roses, nor might she ;
Such swift short beauty is its only fruit ;
So a sweet silence is her eulogy,
And praise is mute.



IN MEMORY OF A FRIEND.*

BENEATH the feathery fronds of palm
The white stone of a double grave,
And on the horizon, blue and calm,
The tropic ocean wave.

'Twas three years since, no more, that thou,
Dear friend, with us, in daily round,
Didst labour where we labour now,
'Mid London's surge of sound.

* Ernest Schalch, Attorney-General for Jamaica, who, with his only sister, died of yellow fever in February, 1874.

Treading the dull slow paths of law,
With little of reward or gain,
To feel a high ambition gnaw
Thy heart with tooth of pain,

And mark with scant content the crowd
Fulfil the immemorial rule
Which drives the fool with plaudits loud
To glorify the fool.

And so with patient scorn didst gain
To winnow from the growing heap
Of barren precedent the grain
Which lies there buried deep.

Till last, congenial labour came,
To call thee o'er the tropic sea,
And exile, guilt by toil and fame,
Severed thy friends from thee.

Brief as we hoped, but ah, how long !
Though lit by news of days well spent,
Of rights defined, of law made strong,
Of rebels grown content,

Of ordered codes so reasoned out,
Speaking with voice so true and clear,
That none who hear them still may doubt
" 'Tis Justice speaketh here."

Yet not the less thou barest part
In the old talk we loved before ;
The newest growths of thought or art
Delighted more and more,

And all the marvels of thy isle,
The lavish wealth of sea and land,
The skies with their too constant smile,
White surf on breathless strand,

The shallow nature fierce, yet gay,
Of our dark brethren ; thou didst learn.
Noting—but gazing, far away,
With eyes that still would yearn,

For that fair time when, toil being done,
The happy day at length should come,
When with our kindly autumn sun
Thou should'st revisit home.

* * * * *

It was this very year ; and then
The plague, which long time, dealing death,
Had vexed the shores of kindred men,
On those breathed deadly breath.

And one, I know not who, their guest,
Sickening, Love drew them forth to tend,
Careless of needful food and rest,
Their fever-stricken friend,

Who owed to them life's reflux power ;
While for those duteous martyrs twain,
Brother and Sister, one blest hour
Brought one release from pain.

Too generous natures ! kindred souls !—
And now, round those twin tombs the wave,
Forgetful of their story, rolls,
And the palms shade their grave.

* * * * *

And we—what shall we say of thee ?—
Thou hast thy due reward, oh, friend—
We serve a High Necessity,
To an Invisible End.

That waste nor halting comes at all
In all the scheme is all we know ;
The force was formed that bade thee fall,
Millions of years ago.

The clouds of circumstance unite,
The winds of fate together roll ;
They meet ; there bursts a sudden light,
And consecrates a soul !

IT SHALL BE WELL.

If thou shalt be in heart a child,
Forgiving, tender, meek, and mild,
Though with light stains of earth defiled,
Oh, soul, it shall be well.

It shall be well with thee indeed,
Whate'er thy race, thy tongue, thy creed ;
Thou shalt not lose thy fitting meed.
It shall be surely well.

Not where, nor how, nor when we know,
Nor by what stages thou shalt grow ;
We may but whisper faint and low,
“ It shall be surely well.”

It shall be well with thee, oh, soul,
Tho' the heavens wither like a scroll ;
Tho' sun and moon forget to roll,
Oh, soul, it shall be well.

A REMONSTRANCE.

If ever, for a passing day,
My careless rhymes shall gain to please,
I would that those who read may say,
“Left he no more than these?”

For sure it is a piteous thing
That those blest souls to whom is given
The instinct and the power to sing,
The choicest gift of heaven,

Not from high peak to peak alone
Our faithful footsteps care to guide,
But oft by plains of sand and stone,
Dull wastes, and naught beside.

Who the low crawling verse prolong,
Careless alike of fame and time ;
The form, but not the soul of song—
A dreary hum of rhyme.

A straight road, by a stagnant stream,
Where the winged steed, which late would soar
From the white summits like a dream,
Creeps slowly evermore.

A babble of sound, like that flat noise
Which, when the harmonies grow dumb,
Between the symphony's awful joys,
Too oft is heard to come.

Grave error ; since not all of life
Is rhythmic ; oft by level ways
We walk ; the sweet creative strife,
The inspired heroic days,

Are rare for all,—no food for song,
Are common hours ; and those who hold
The gift, the inspiration strong,
More precious far than gold,

Only when heart is fired and brain,
And the soul spreads its soaring wing,
Only when nobler themes constrain,
Should ever dare to sing.



THIRD SERIES.

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SONG.

TELL me where I may quench the too fierce fire
Of hope and of desire ;
Tell me how I may from my soul remove
The sting and pain of love ;
Tell me, and I will give to thee,
Magician, my whole soul in fee.

And yet I know not what of fit reward,
For enterprise so hard,
I might convey thee in a loveless soul,
Whose currents no more roll :
A corpse, corruptible and cold,
Were no great prize to have and hold.

Time only is it that will deign to take
Such things for their own sake,
Preferring age to youth, grey hairs to brown,
And to bright smiles the frown.
Time takes the hope, Time dulls the smart,
And first makes slow, then stops the heart.

Wherefore to Time I will address my song.
Time, equable and strong,
Take thou all hopes and longings clean away—
And yet I prithee stay ;
Forbear, for rather I would be
Consumed than turn to ice with thee.



THE HOME ALTAR.

WHY should we seek at all to gain
By vigils, and in pain,
By lonely life and empty heart,
To set a soul apart
Within a cloistered cell,
For whom the precious, homely hearth would serve as
well ?

There, with the early breaking morn,
Ere quite the day is born,
The lustral waters flow serene,
And each again grows clean ;
From sleep, as from a tomb,
Born to another dawn of joy, and hope, and doom.

There through the sweet and toilsome day,
To labour is to pray ;
There love with kindly beaming eyes
Prepares the sacrifice ;
And voice and innocent smile
Of childhood do our cheerful liturgies beguile.

There, at his chaste and frugal feast,
Love sitteth as a Priest ;
And with mild eyes and mien sedate,
His deacons stand and wait ;
And round the holy table
Paten and chalice range in order serviceable.

And when ere night, the vespers said,
Low lies each weary head,
What giveth He who gives them sleep,
But a brief death less deep ?
Or what the fair dreams given
But ours who, daily dying, dream a happier heaven ?

Then not within a cloistered wall
Will we expend our days ;
But dawns that break and eves that fall
Shall bring their dues of praise.
This best befits a Ruler always near,
This duteous worship mild, and reasonable fear.



THE VOYAGE.

Who climbs the Equatorial main
Drives on long time through mist and cloud,
Through zones of storm, through thunders loud,
For many a night of fear and pain.

Till one night all is clear, and lo !
He sees with wondering, awe-struck eyes,
In depths above, in depths below,
Strange constellations light the skies—

New stars, more splendid and more fair,
Yet not without a secret loss :
He seeks in vain the Northern Bear,
And finds instead the Southern Cross.

Yet dawns the self-same sun—the same
The deep below the keel which lies ;
Though this may burn with brighter flame,
And that respond to bluer skies,

The self-same earth, the self-same sky :
And though through clouds and tempests driven,
The self-same seeker lifts an eye
That sees another side of heaven.

No change in man, or earth, or aught,
Save those strange secrets of the night ;
Nor there, save that another thought
Has reached them through another sight,

Which may but know one hemisphere,
The earth's mass blotting out the blue,
Till one day, leaving shadows here,
It sees all heaven before its view.

THE FOOD OF SONG.

How best doth vision come
To the poet's mind,—
Lonely beneath the blue, unclouded dome,
Or battling with the mighty ocean-wind ;
In fair spring mornings, with the soaring lark,
Or amid roaring midnight forests dark ?

Shall he attune his voice
To sweetest song,
When earth and sea and sky alike rejoice,
And men are blest, and think no thought of wrong,
In some ideal heaven, some happy isle,
Where life is stiffened to a changeless smile ?

Or best amid the noise
Of high designs,
Loud onsets, shatterings, awful battle joys,
Wherefor the loftier spirit longs and pines ;
Or by the depths of Thought's unfathomed sea ;
Or to loud thunders of the Dawn to be ?

Nature is less than naught
In smile or frown,
But for the formless, underlying thought
Of mind and purpose greater than our own ;
This only can these empty shows inform,
Smiles through the calm, and animates the storm.

Nor 'mid the clang and rush
Of mightier thought,
The steeps, the snows, the gulfs, that whelm and crush
The seeker with the treasure he has sought ;
Too vast, too swift, too formless to inspire
The fictive hand, or touch the lips with fire.

Rather amid the throng
Of toiling men
He finds the food and sustenance of song,
Spread by hidden hands, again, and yet again,
Where'er he goes, by crowded city street,
He fares thro' springing fancies sad and sweet—

Some innocent baby smile ;
A close-wound waist ;
Fathers and children ; things of shame and guile ;
Dim eyes, and lips at parting kissed in haste ;
The halt, the blind, the prosperous thing of ill ;
The thief, the wanton, touch and vex him still.

Or if sometimes he turn
With a new thrill,
And strives to paint anew with words that burn
The inner thought of sea, or sky, or hill :
It is because a breath of human life
Has touched them: joy and suffering, rest and strife.

And he sees mysteries
Above, around,
Fair spiritual fleeting agencies
Haunting each foot of consecrated ground :
And so, these fading, raises bolder eyes
Beyond the furthest limits of the skies,

And every thought and word,
And all things seen,
And every passion which his heart has stirred,
And every joy and sorrow which has been,
And every step of life his feet have trod,
Lead by broad stairs of glory up to God.



THE YOUTH OF THOUGHT.

OH happy days ! oh joyous time !

When thought was gay and man was young,
And to a golden flow of rhyme,
Life like a melody was sung ;

When, in the springtime of the earth,
The cloud-capt hill, the dewy grove,
Clear lake and rippling stream gave birth
To shy Divinities of love ;

When often to the jovial feast
Of love or wine the people came,
And Nature was the only priest
And Youth and Pleasure knew not shame.

Nor darker shape of wrong or ill
The fearful fancy might inspire,
Than vine-crowned on some shady hil',
The Satyr nursing quaint desire.

And if some blooming youth or maid
In depths of wood or stream were lost,
Some love-lorn Deity, 'twas said,
The blissful truant's path had crossed.

Sweet time of fancy, giving place
To times of thinking scarce less blest,
When Wisdom wore a smiling face,
And Knowledge was like Fancy drest,

And Art with Language lived ingrown,
The cunning hand and golden tongue ;
By this the form Divine was shown,
By that its deathless praises sung.

When in cool temples fair and white,
By purple sea, or myrtle shade,
The gods took shape to mortal sight,
By their own creatures' hands re-made.

And daily, to the cheerful noise
Of wrestling, or the panting race—
Through the clear laughter of the boys,
And tender forms of youthful grace—

Grave sages walked in high debate
Beneath the laurel grove, and sought
To solve the mysteries of Fate,
And sound the lowest deeps of Thought ;

Nor knew that they, as those indeed,
Were naked, taking fair for right ;
With beauty only for all creed,
Yet not without some heaven-sent light.

Now preaching clear the deathless soul ;
Now winging love from sloughs of shame ;
And oft from earthly vapours foul,
Soaring aloft with tongues of flame.

Knew they no inward voice to vex
The careless joyance of their way—
No pointing finger stern, which checks
The sad transgressor of to-day ?

Fair dream, if any dream be fair,
Which knows no fuller life than thine ;
Which only moves through earthly air,
And builds on shadows half divine ;

How art thou fled ! For us no more
Dryad or Satyr haunts the grove ;
No Nereid sports upon the shore,
Nor with wreathed horn the Tritons rove ;

Who breathe a fuller, graver air,
Long since to manhood's stature grown ;
Who leave our childhood's fancies fair,
For pains and pleasures of our own.

For us no more the young vine climbs,
Its gadding tendrils flinging down ;
Who move in sadder, wiser times,
Whose thorns are woven for a crown.

The lily and the passion-flower
Preach a new tale of gain and loss,
And in the wood-nymph's closest bower
The springing branches form the Cross.

"A great hope traversing the earth,"
Has taken all the young world's bloom,
And for the joy and flush of birth,
Has left the solemn thought of doom ;

And made the body no more divine,
And built our Heaven no longer here
And given for joyous fancies fine,
Souls bowed with holy awe and fear.

And far beyond the suns, removed
The godhead seen by younger eyes,
Leaving the people once beloved,
Girt round by dreadful mysteries ;

Fulfilled with thoughts, more fair and dear
Than all the lighter joys of yore,
Immeasurable hopes brought near,
And Heaven laid open more and more.

But not with love and peace alone
Time came, which older joys could take ;
But with fierce brand and hopeless groan,
Red war, the dungeon, and the stake ;

And lives by Heaven too much opprest,
And cloisters dim with tears and sighs,
And young hearts withered in the breast,
And fasts and stripes and agonies ;

And for Apollo breathing strength,
And Aphrodité warm with life ;
A tortured Martyr come at length,
To the last pang of lifelong strife.

While round us daily move no more
Those perfect forms of youthful grace,
No more men worship as before
The rounded limb, the clear-cut face ;

Who see the dwarfed mechanic creep,
With hollow cheek, and lungs that bleed,
Or the swart savage fathoms deep,
Who comes to air, to sleep, and breed.

Aye, but by loom, or forge, or mine,
Or squalid hut, there breaks for these
Hope more immense, awe more divine
Than ever dawned on Sokrates.

Who if they seek to live again
In careless lives the pagan charm,
May only prove a lifelong pain,
For that clear conscience void of harm.

For in the manhood of God's days
We live, and not in careless youth ;
The essence more than form we praise,
And Beauty moves us less than Truth.

From youth to age ; till cycles hence
Another and a higher Spring,
And with a truer innocence,
Again the world shall think and sing.



SONG.

I WOULD thou might'st not vex me with thine eyes,
Thou fair Ideal Beauty, nor would'st shame
All lower thoughts and visions as they rise,
As in mid-noon a flame.

For now thy presence leaves no prospect fair,
Nor joy in act, nor charm in any maid,
Nor end to be desired, for which men dare,
Thou making me afraid.

Because life seems through thee a thing too great
To spend on these, which else might grow to thee;
So that fast bound, I idly hesitate :
I prithee set me free ;

Or, hold me, if thou wilt, but come not near,
Let me pursue thee still in ghostly grace ;
Far off let me pursue thee, for I fear
To faint before thy face.

AT CHAMBERS.

To the chamber, where now uncaring
I sit apart from the strife,
While the fool and the knave are sharing
The pleasures and profits of life,

There came a faint knock at the door,
Not long since on a terrible day ;
One faint little knock, and no more ;
And I brushed the loose papers away.

And as no one made answer, I rose,
With quick step and impatience of look,
And a glance of the eye which froze,
And a ready voice of rebuke.

But when the door opened, behold !
A mother, low-voiced and mild,
Whose thin shawl and weak arms enfold
A pale little two-year-old child.

What brought her there? Would I relieve her?
Was all the poor mother could say;
For her child, scarce recovered from fever,
Left the hospital only that day.

Pale, indeed, was the child; yet so cheerful,
That, seeing me wonder, she said,
Of doubt and repulse, grown fearful,
“Please look at his dear little head;”

And snatched off the little bonnet,
And so in a moment laid bare
A shorn little head, and upon it
No trace of the newly-come hair.

When, seeing the stranger's eye
Grow soft; with an innocent guile
The child looked up, shrinking and shy,
With the ghost of a baby smile.

Poor child! I thought, so soon come
To the knowledge of lives oppressed,
To whom poverty comes with home,
And sickness brings food and rest:

Who art launched forth, a frail little boat,
In the midst of life's turbulent sea,
To sink, it may be, or to float
On great waves that care nothing for thee.

What awaits thee? An early peace
In the depths of a little grave,
Or, despite all thy ills to increase,
Through some dark chance, mighty to save;

Till in stalwart manhood you meet
The strong man, who regards you to-day,
Crawling slowly along the street,
In old age withered and gray?

Who knows? But the thoughts I have told
In one instant flashed through my brain,
As the poor mother, careful of cold,
Clasped her infant to her again.

And I, if I searched for my purse,
Was I selfish, say you, and wrong?
Surely silver is wasted worse
Than in earning the right to a song



EVENSONG.

* THE hymns and the prayers were done, and the village
church was still,
As I lay in a waking dream in the churchyard upon the
hill.

The graves were all around, and the dark yews over my
head,
And below me the winding stream and the exquisite
valley were spread.

The sun was sloping down with a glory of dying rays,
And the hills were bathed in gold, and the woods were
vocal with praise.

But from the deep-set valley there rose a vapour of grey,
And the sweet day sank, and the glory waxed fainter and
faded away.

Then there came, like a chilling wind, a cold, low
whisper of doubt,
Which silenced the echo of hymns, and blotted the
glories out.

And I wrestled with powers unseen, and strove with a
Teacher divine,
Like Jacob who strove with the angel, and found with
the dawn a sign.

* * * * *

For I thought of the words they sang : It is He that
hath made us indeed ;
And my thought flew back to the Fathers of thought and
their atheist creed—

How atom with atom at first fortuitously combined,
Formed all, from the worlds without to the innermost
worlds of mind ;

And I thought : What, if this be true, and no Maker
there is indeed,
And God is the symbol alone of a feeble and worn-out
creed ;

And from uncreate atoms, impelled by a blind chance
driving on free,
Grew together the primal forms of all essences that be !

Then a voice : If they were, indeed, they were separate
one from one

By a gulph as broad as yawns in space betwixt sun and
sun—

Self-centred and self-contained, disenvironed and isolate ;
Drawn together by a hidden love, torn apart by a hidden
hate.

What power was this—chance, will you say? But chance,
what else can it mean

Than the hidden Cause of things by human reason
unseen?

Chance ! Then Chance were a name for God, or each
atom bearing a soul

Indivisible, like with like, part and whole of the Infinite
Whole.

Were God, as the Pantheist taught, God in earth, and in
sky, and in air,

God through every thought and thing, and made manifest
everywhere ;

The spring and movement of things—the stir, the
breathing of breath,

Without which all things were quenched in the calm
of an infinite death ;

Or, if within each there lay some germ of an unborn
power,
God planted it first, God quickened, God raised it from
seed to flower.

Though beneath the weird cosmical force, which we
wield and yet cannot name,
From the germ or the rock we draw out low gleams of
life's faintest flame ;

Though we lose the will that commands, and the muscles
that wait and serve,
In some haze of a self-set spring of the molecules of
nerve ;

Though we sink all spirit in matter, and let the Theo-
gonies die,
Life and death are ; thinker and thought ; outward,
inward ; I, and not I,
And the I is the Giver of life, and without it the matter
must die.

* * * * *

Then I ceased for a while from thought, as I lay on the
long green grass,
Hearing echoes of hymns anew, and letting the moments
pass.

The evening was mounting upward ; the sunbeams had
left the hill ;

But the dying daylight lingered, and all the valley was
still.

* * * * *

Then I said : But if God there be, how shall man by his
thinking find,

Who is only a finite creature, the depths of the Infinite
Mind—

Who sounds with a tiny plummet, who scans with a
purblind eye,

The depths of that fathomless ocean, the wastes of that
limitless sky ?

Shall we bow to a fetish, a symbol, which maybe not
sees nor hears ;

Or, seeing and hearing indeed, takes no thought for our
hopes or fears ;

Who is dumb, though we long for a word ; who is deaf,
though his children cry ;

Who is Master, yet bears with evil—Lord, and lets all
precious things die ?

Or if in despair we turn from the godless and meaningless
plan,

What do we, but make for ourselves a God in the image
of man—

A creature of love and hate, a creature who makes for
good,
But barred by an evil master from working the things
that he would ?

If he be not a reflex image, we may not know him at all ;
If he be, we are God ourselves—to ourselves we shall
stand or fall.

Then the voice : But what folly is this ! Cannot God
indeed be known,
If we know not the hidden essence that forms Him and
builds His throne ?

Is all our knowledge naught, of sea, and of sky, and of
star,
Till we know them, not as they seem to our thinking, but
as they are ?

We who build the whole fabric of knowledge on vague
abstractions sublime ;
We who whirl through an infinite space, and live in an
infinite time ;

We who prate of Motion and Force, not knowing that
on either side
Black gulphs unavoidable yawn, dark riddles our thought
deride ;

Shall we hold our science as naught of all things of
earth, because

We know but the seemings and shows, the relations, and
not the cause—

Not only as he who admires the rainbow and cloud of
gold,

Knows that 'tis but a form of vapour his wondering eyes
behold ;

But as he who sees and knows, and knowing would fain
ignore

What he knows since the essence of things is hid, and he
knows not more—

Or who would not love his love, or walk hand in hand
with his friend,

Since he sees not the roots of the tree from whose
branches life's blossoms depend?

Or how should the sight we see, any more than the sound
we hear,

Be a thing which exists for our thought, apart from the
eye or the ear ;

Is not every atom of dust, which compacted we call the
earth,

A miracle baffling our thought with insoluble wonders of
birth?

And know we not, indeed, that the matter which men
have taught,
Is itself an essence unseen and untouched—but by spirit
and thought?

Tush! It is but a brain-sick dream. What was it that
taught us the laws
Which stand as a bar between us and the thought of the
Infinite Cause?

Is He infinite, out of relation, and absolute, past finding
out?

Reach we not an antinomy here? feel we here no striving
of doubt?

How, then, shall the finite define the bounds of the
infinite plan,
This is finite, and infinite this: here is Deity, here is
man.

If our judgment be relative only, how then shall our
brain transcend
The limits of relative thought; grown too eager to
comprehend?

For he passes the bounds of relation, if any there be
who can
Distinguish the absolute God from the relative in man:

He has bridged the gulph ; he has leaped o'er the bound ;
he has seen with his eyes
For a moment the land unseen, that beyond the mountain
peaks lies.

Nay ! we see but a part of God, since we gaze with a
finite sight ;
And yet not Darkness is He, but a blinding splendour of
light.

Do we shrink from this light, and let our dazzled eyeballs
fall ?

Nay ! a God fully known or utterly dark, were not God
at all.

Though we hold not that in some sphere which our
thought may never conceive,
There comes not a time when, to know may be all, and
not, to believe ;

Nor yet that the right which we love, and the wrong
which we hate to-day,
May not show as reversed, or as one, when the finite has
passed away ;

God we know in our image indeed, since we are in the
image of Him,
Of His splendour a faint low gleam, of His glory a reflex
dim.

Bowing not to the all unknown, nor to that which is
searched out quite;
But to That which is known, yet unknown—to the
darkness that comes of light,
To the contact of God with man, to the struggle and
triumph of right.

* * * * *

Then I ceased for a while from thought, as I lay on
the long green grass,
Hearing echoes of hymns grown nearer, and letting the
moments pass.

Exult, oh dust and ashes ! the low voices seemed to say;
And then came a sudden hush, and the jubilation faded
away.

The evening was dying now, and the moon-rise was on
the hill,
And the soft light touched the river, and all the valley
was still.

* * * * *

Then I thought : But if God there be, and our thought
may reach Him indeed,
How should this bare knowledge alone stand in lieu of a
fuller creed ?

If He be and is good, as they say, how yet can our
judgment approve,

'Mid the rule of His iron laws, the place of His infinite
love?

The rocks are built up of death, earth and sea teem
with ravin and wrong ;

The sole law in Nature we learn, is the law that
strengthens the strong.

Through countless ages of time, the Lord has withdrawn
Him apart

From all the world He has made, save the world of the
human heart.

Without and within all is pain, from the cry of the child
at birth,

To its parting sigh in age, when it looks for a happier
earth.

Should you plead that God's order goes forth with a
measured footstep sublime,

Know you not that you thrust Him back thus to the first
beginnings of time,—

That a spark, a moment, a flash, and His work was over
and done ;

And the worlds were sent forth for ever, each circling
around its sun.

Bearing with it all secrets of being, all potencies
undefined,
All forms and changes of matter, all growths and achieve-
ments of mind.

What is there for our worship in this, and should not our
reason say,
He is, and made us indeed, but hides Him too far away?

Though He lives, yet is He as one dead; and we, who
would prostrate fall
Before the light of His Presence, we see not nor know
Him at all.

'Then the voice: Oh folly of doubt! what is time that
we deem so far,
What else but a multiple vast of the little lives that are?

He who lives for the fifty years, which scarce rear thought
to its prime,
Already a measure has lived of a thousand years of time.

Twice this, and Christ spoke not yet, and from this what
a span appears,
The space till our thought is lost in the mists of a million
years!

A thousand millions of years—we have leapt with a
thought, with a word ;

To the time when no flutter of life 'neath the shield of the
trilobite stirred.

All time is too brief for our thought, and yet we would
bring God nigh,

Till He worked in His creature's sight, man standing
undazzled by.

Such a God were not God indeed ; nor, if He should
change at all,

Should we hold, as we hold Him now, the God of both
great and small.

How know we the great things from small ? how mark we
the adequate cause,

Which might make the Creator impede the march of His
perfect laws,—

We, who know but a part, not the whole ? Or were it a
fitting thought

He should stoop in our sight to amend the errors His
hand had wrought,

So His laws were not perfect at all ? or should He amend
them indeed,

How supply by a fitful caprice the want of a normal
creed ?

All life is a mode of force, and all force that is force
must move ;

'Tis a friction of Outward and Inward, a contrast of
Hatred and Love.

Joy and Grief, Right and Wrong, Life and Death, Finite,
Infinite, Matter and Will,

These are the twin wheels of the Chariot of Life, which
without them stood still.

Would you seek in an order reversed and amended a
Hand divine ?

Nay, the Wonder of wonders lies in unchangeable
design.

Should God break His law as He might ; should He
stoop from His infinite skies

To redress that which seems to us wrong, to raise up the
life that dies ;

Should He save from His wolf His lamb, from His tiger,
His innocent child ;

Should He quench the fierce flames, or still, the great
waves clamouring wild,

I think a great cry would go up from an orderless
Universe,

And all the fair fabric of things would wither, as under a
curse.

'Tis the God of the savage, is this. What do we who rise
by degrees
To the gift of the mind that perceives, and the gift of the
eye that sees?

Does not all our nature tend to a law of unbending rule,
Till equity comes but to mend the law that was made by
the fool?

Who shows highest?—the child or the savage, whose
smiles change to rage or to tears?

Or the statesman moving, unmoved, through a nation's
desires and fears?

Or the pilgrim whose eyes look onward, as if to a
distant home,
Never turning aside from his path, whatever allurements
may come?

All Higher is more Unmoved; and the more unbroken
the law,
The more sure does the Giver show to the eyes of a
wondering awe.

Nor is it with all of truth that they make their voices
complain,
Who weary our thought with tales of a constant ruin and
pain.

It is but a brain-sick dream that would gloat o'er the
hopeless bed,
Or the wreck, or the crash, or the fight, with their tales of
the dying and dead.

Pain comes ; hopeless pain, God knows and we know,
again and again ;
But even pain has its intervals blest, when 'tis heaven to
be free from pain.

And I think that the wretch who lies pressed by a load
of incurable ill,
With a grave pity pities himself, but would choose to have
lived to it still ;

And, as he whom the tiger bears in his jaws to his blood-
stained den
Feels no pain nor fear, but a wonder what comes in the
wonderful "Then,"

He pities himself and yet knows, as he casts up life's
chequered sum,
It were best on the whole to have lived, whatever calamity
come.

And the earth is full of joy. Every blade of grass that
springs ;
Every cool worm that crawls content as the eagle on
soaring wings ;

Every summer day instinct with life ; every dawn when
from waking bird

And morning hum of the bee, a chorus of praise is
heard ;

Every gnat that sports in the sun for his little life of a
day ;

Every flower that opens its cup to the dews of a per-
fumed May ;

Every child that wakes with a smile, and sings to the
ceiling at dawn ;

Every bosom which knows a new hope stir beneath its
virginal lawn ;

Every young soul, ardent and high, rushing forth into life's
hot fight ;

Every home of happy content, lit by love's own mystical
light ;

Every worker who works till the evening, and earns before
night his wage,

Be his work a furrow straight-drawn, or the joy of a
bettered age ;

Every thinker who, standing aloof from the throng, finds
a high delight

In striking with tongue or with pen a stroke for the
triumph of right ;—

All these know that life is sweet ; all these, with a
consonant voice,
Read the legend of Time with a smile, and that which
they read is, " Rejoice ! "

* * * * *

Then again I ceased from thought, as I lay on the long
green grass,
Hearing hymns which grew fuller and fuller, and letting
the moments pass.

Exult, oh dust and ashes ! exult and rejoice ! they said,
For blessed are they who live, and blessed are they who
are dead.

Then again they ceased and were still, and my thought
began once more,
But touched with a silvery gleam of hopes that were
hidden before ;

The moon had climbed up the clear sky, far above the
black pines on the hill,
And the river ran molten silver, and all the valley was
still.

* * * * *

Then I said : But if God there be, who made us indeed
and is good,
What guide has He left for our feet to walk in the ways
that He would ?

For though He should speak indeed, yet, as soon as His
voice grew dumb,

It were only through human speech that the message it
bore might come,

Sunk to levels of human thought, and always marred
and confined

By the chain of a halting tongue, and the curse of a
finite mind ;

So that he who would learn, indeed, what precepts His
will has taught,

Must dim with a secular learning the brightness his soul
has sought.

Who can tell how those scattered leaves through gradual
ages grew,

Adding chaff and dust from the world to the accents
simple and true ?

If one might from the seer's wild visions, or stories of
fraud and blood,

Or lore of the world-worn Sultan, discern the sure voice
of good,

Such a mind were a God to itself ; or if you should
answer, For each

God has set a sure mentor within, with power to convince
and teach ;

Yet it speaks with a changeful voice, which alters with
race and clime,

Nay, even in the self-same lands is changed with the
changes of time ;

So that 'twixt the old Europe of story and that which we
know to-day,

Yawns a gulph, as wide almost as parts us from far
Cathay ;

What power has such voice to help us? Or if we should
turn instead

To the precious dissonant pages, which keep what the
Teacher said ;

How reduce them to one indeed, or how seek in vain to
ignore

The forgotten teachers who taught His counsels of mercy
before ?

Not "an eye for an eye" alone, was the rule which they
loved to teach,

But Mercy, and Pity, and Love, though they spoke
with a halting speech,

And He spake with the tongue of those who had spoken
and then were dumb,

And clothed in the words of the Law, which He loved,
would His precepts come ;

Nor always perfect was He in thought, in act, or in word,

Who withered in haste the fig-tree, and drove to destruction the herd ;

Who was angry sometimes, and spoke with quick words and fiery hate ;

Who offered too-perfect counsels, and took little thought for the State.

Other teachers have drawn more millions, who follow more faithful than we ;

Other teachers have taught a rule as stern and unselfish as He.

If we shrink from the Caliph fierce, who carved out a faith with his sword,

What say we of the pilgrim who sways the old East with his gentle word ?

Or what of the sage whose vague thoughts, over populous wastes of earth,

Have led millions of fettered feet to the grave from the day of birth ?

Or how can we part indeed, the show, the portent, the sign,

From the simple words which glow with the light of a teaching Divine ?

And if careless of these, as of growths which spring up
and bear fruit and fall,

Yet how shall our thought accept the crowning wonder
of all?

Yet if this we reject, wherein, doth our faith and assur-
ance lie?

What is it to us that God lives, we who live for a little
and die;

Or why were it not more wise to live as the beasts of
to-day,

Taking life, while it lasts, as a gift, and secure of the
future as they?

Then the voice: Oh, disease of doubt! now I seem to
hold you indeed,

Keeping fast in my grasp at length the sum of your
dreary creed.

How else should man prove God's will, than through
methods of human thought?

How else than through human words should he gather the
things that he ought?

If the Lord should speak day by day from Sinai, 'mid
clouds and fire,

Should we hear 'mid those thunders loud the still voices
which now inspire?

Would not either that awful sound, like that vivid and
scorching blaze,
Confuse our struggling thought, and our tottering foot-
steps amaze ?

Or, if it should peal so clear that to hear were to obey
indeed,
'Twere a thing of dry knowledge alone, not one of a
faithful creed ;

No lantern for erring feet, but a glare on a white, straight
road,
Where life struggled its weary day, to sink before night
with its load ;

Where the blinded soul might long for the shade of a
cloud of doubt,
And yearn for dead silence, to blot that terrible utterance
out.

Yet God is not silent indeed ; not seldom from every
page—
From the lisping story of eld to the seer with his noble
rage ;

From the simple life divine, with its accents gentle and
true,
To the thinker who formed by his learning and watered
the faith as it grew :

All are fired by the Spirit of God. Nor true is the doubt
you teach,
That God speaks not to all men the same, but differs
'twixt each and each.

Each differs from each a little, with difference of race
and of clime ;
Each is changed, but not transformed, with the onward
process of time ;

Each nation, each age, has its laws, whereto it shall
stand or fall,
But built on a wider Law, which is under and over them
all.

Nor doubt we that from Western wilds to the long-sealed
isles of Japan,
There runs the unbroken realm of a Law that is common
to man.

Not as ours shows the law they obey, and yet it is one
and the same,
Though it comes in a varying shape, and is named by
another name.

Not so shall your doubt prevail ; nor if any should dream
to-day,
By praise of Jew or of Greek, to dissolve His glory
away,

Can they hold that God left His world with no gleam of
glory from Him,
No light clouds edged with splendour, no radiance of
Godhead dim.

Others were before Christ had come. Oh ! dear dead
Teacher, whose word,
Long before the sweet voice on the Hill, young hearts
had quickened and stirred ;

Who spak'st of the soul and the life ; with limbs chilled
by the rising death,
Yielding up to thy faith, with a smile, the last gasp of
thy earthly breath ;—

And thou, oh golden-mouthed sage, who with brilliance
of thought as of tongue,
Didst sing of thy Commonwealth fair, the noblest of
epics unsung ;

In whose pages thy Master's words shine forth, sublimed
and refined
In the music of perfect language, inspired by a faithful
mind ;—

And ye seers of Israel and doctors, whose breath was
breathed forth to move
The dry dead bones of the Law with the life of a larger
love ;—

Or thou, great Saint of the East, in whose footsteps the
millions have trod
'Till from life, like an innocent dream, they pass'd and
were lost in God ;—

And thou, quaint teacher of old, whose dead words,
though all life be gone,
Through the peaceful Atheist realms keep the millions
labouring on ;—

Shall I hold that ye, as the rest, spake no echo of things
divine,
That no gleam of a clouded sun through the mists of
your teaching may shine?

Nay ; such thoughts were to doubt of God. Yet, strange
it is and yet sure,
No teacher of old was full of mercy as ours, or pure.

'Twixt the love that He taught, and the Greek with his
nameless, terrible love,
Yawns a gulph as wide as parts hell beneath and heaven
above ;

'Twixt His rule of a Higher Mercy and that which the
Rabbi taught,
Lies the gulph between glowing Act and barren 'ashes of
Thought.

For the pure thought smirched and fouled, or buried in
pedant lore,
He brought a sweet Reason of Force, such as man knew
never before.

What to us are the men of the East, though they preach
their own Gospel indeed?
We are men of the West, and shall stand or fall by a
Western creed.

Though we see in those Scriptures antique, faint flames of
Diviner fire,
Who would change to Buddha from Christ, as a change
from lower to higher?

Nay! He is our Teacher indeed. Little boots it to-day
to seek
To arraign, with a laboured learning, the words that men
heard Him speak;

To cavil, to carp, to strive, through the mists of an age-
long haze,
To dim to a common light the star which could once
amaze;

To fix by some pigmy canon, too short for the tale of
to-day,
The facts of a brief life, fled eighteen centuries away;

To mark by a guess, and to spurn, as born of a later age,
The proofs which, whenever writ, bear God's finger on
every page ;

Or to sneer at the wonders they saw Him work, or
believed they saw ;
We who know that unbending sequence is only a phase
of law,

No wonder which God might do if it rested on witness of
men,
Would turn to it our thought of to-day as it turned the
multitudes then.

Nor proved would avail a whit if the teaching itself were
not pure ;
Nor if it were pure as His would make it one whit more
sure.

And for the great Wonder of all. If any there be who
fears
That the spark of God in his breast may be quenched in
a few short years ;

Who feels his faith's fire blaze aloft more clear than it
burnt before,
By the thought of the empty tomb and the stone rolled
back from the door :

For him was the miracle done. If no proof makes
clearer to me
Than His word to my inner sense, the Higher life that
shall be ;

If no Force that has once leapt forth can ever decline
and fall,
From the dead forces stirring the worlds, to the Life-force
which dominates all ;

But the sum of life is the same, and shall be when the
world is done,
As it was when its first faint spark was stirred by the kiss
of the sun ;—

If I feel a sure knowledge within, which shall never be
blotted out,
A Longing, a Faith, a Conviction, too strong for a
Whisper of Doubt

That my life shall be hid with a Lord, who shall do the
thing that is best—
To be purged, it may be, long time, or taken at once to
rest,—

To live, it may be, myself ; from all else, individual, sole,
Or blended with other lives, or sunk in the Infinite
whole—

(Though I doubt not that that which is I may endure in
the ages to be,
Since I know not what bars hold apart the Not-Me
and the mystical Me ;—)

How else than thro' Him do I grasp the faith that for
Greek and Jew
Was hidden, or but dimly seen, which nor Moses nor
Sokrates knew ?

Ay ! He is our Teacher indeed. He is risen, and we
shall rise ;
But if only as we He rose, not the less He lives in the
skies.

And if those who proclaim Him to-day in the dim gray
lands of the East,
Prove him not by portent or sign, not by trick or secret
of priest ;

But for old cosmogonies dead, and faint precepts too
weak for our need,
Offer God brought nearer to man in a living and glowing
creed.

The pure teaching, the passionate love, taking thought
for the humble and weak,
The pitiful scorn of wrong, which His Scriptures every-
where speak,

Not writ for the sage in his cell, but preached 'mid the
turmoil and strife,
And touched with a living brand from the fire of the
Altar of Life.

So, of all the wonders they tell, no wonder our hearts
has stirred
Like the Wonder which lives with us still in a living and
breathing Word.

More than portents, more than all splendours of rank
loyal hearts devise,
More than visions of heavenly forms caught up and lost
in the skies,

This the crowning miracle shows, before which we must
prostrate fall ;
For this is the living voice of the Lord and Giver of all.

* * * * *

Then I ceased again from thought, as I lay on the long
green grass,
Thrilled through by a music of hymns, and letting the
moments pass.

Exult and rejoice ! they sang in high unison, now com-
bined
Which were warring voices before, the voices of heart
and mind.

The earth was flooded with light, over valley and river
and hill,

And this is the hymn which I heard them sing, while the
world lay still :

Exult, oh dust and ashes ! Rejoice, all ye that are
dead !

For ye live too who lie beneath, as we live who walk
overhead.

As God lives, so ye are living ; ye are living and moving
to-day,

Not as they live who breathe and move, yet living and
conscious as they.

And ye too, oh living, exult. Young and old, exult and
rejoice ;

For the Lord of the quick and the dead lives still : we
have heard His voice.

We have heard His voice, and we hear it sound wider
and more increased,

To the sunset plains of the West from the peaks of the
furthest East.

For the quick and the dead, it was given ; for them it is
sounding still,

And no pause of silence shall break the clear voice of
the Infinite Will.

Not only through Christ long since, and the teachers of
ages gone,

But to-day He speaks, day by day, to those who are
toiling on ;

More clear perhaps then, to the ear, and with nigher
voice and more plain,

But still the same Teacher Divine, speaking to us again
and again.

For I like not his creed, if any there be, who shall dare
to hold

That God comes to us only at times far away in the
centuries old.

Not so ; but He dwells with us still ; and maybe, though
I know not indeed,

He will send us a Christ again, with a fuller and perfecter
creed—

A Christ who shall speak to all men, East and West, and
North and South,

Till the whole world shall hear and believe the gracious
words of His mouth.

When knowledge has pierced through the wastes, chaining
earth together and sea,

And the bars of to-day are lost in the union of all that
shall be ;

And the brotherhood that He loved is more than a
saintly thought,
And the wars and the strifes which we mourn are lost in
the peace He taught ;

Then Christ coming shall make all things new. Or it
may be that ages of pain
Shall quench the dim light of to-day, bringing back the
thick darkness again.

And then, slow as the tide which flows on though each
wave may seem to recede,
Man advances again and again to the Rock of a higher
creed.

Or it may be no teacher shall come down again with
God in his face,
But the light which before was reflected from One shall
shine on the race.

And as this wide earth grows smaller, and men to men
nearer draw,
There may spring from the root of the race the flower of
a nobler law,

Growing fairer, and still more fair ; or maybe, through
long ages of time,
Man shall rise up from type to type, to the strength of
an essence sublime,

Removed as far in knowledge, in length of life, and in
good

From us, as we from the mollusc which gasped in the
first warm flood,—

A creature so wise and so high that he scorns all allure-
ment of ill,

Marching on through an ordered life in the strength of a
steadfast will.

Who knows? But, however it be, we live, and shall live
indeed,

In ourselves or in others to come. What more doth our
longing need?

Hid with God, or on earth, we shall see, burning brighter
and yet more bright,

The sphere of humanity move throughout time on its
pathway of light;

Circling round with a narrower orbit, as age upon age
fleets away,

The Centre of Force and of Being, the Fountain of Light
and of Day,

Till, nearer drawn, and more near, at last it shall merge
and fall

In its source; man is swallowed in God, the Part is lost
in the All;

One more world is recalled to rest, one more star adds its
fire to the sun,

One light less wanders thro' space, and the story of man
is done.

* * * * *

Then slowly I rose to go from my place on the long green
grass,

Where so long I had lain in deep thought, and letting
the moments pass :

A great light was flooding the plains of the earth and the
uttermost sky,

The low church and the deep-sunk vale, and the place
where one day I shall lie,

The fresh graves of those we have lost, the dark yews
with their reverend gloom,

And the green wave which only marks the place of the
nameless tomb ;

And thro' all the clear spaces above—oh wonder ! oh
glory of Light !—

Came forth myriads on myriads of worlds, the shining
host of the night,—

The vast forces and fires that know the same sun and
centre as we ;

The faint planets which roll in vast orbits round suns we
shall never see ;

The rays which had sped from the first, with the awful
 swiftness of light,
To reach only then, it might be, the confines of mortal
 sight :

Oh, wonder of Cosmical Order ! oh, Maker and Ruler
 of all,
Before whose Infinite greatness in silence we worship
 and fall !

Could I doubt that the Will which keeps this great
 universe steadfast and sure
Can be less than His creatures thought, full of goodness,
 pitiful, pure ?

Could I dream that the Power which keeps those great
 suns circling around,
Takes no thought for the humblest life which flutters and
 falls to the ground ?

Oh, Faith ! thou art higher than all. Then I turned
 from the glories above,
And from every casement new-lit there shone a soft
 radiance of love :

Young mothers were teaching their children to fold little
 hands in prayer ;
Strong fathers were resting from toil, 'mid the hush of the
 Sabbath air ;

Peasant lovers strolled thro' the lanes, shy and diffident,
each with each,
Yet knit by some subtle union too fine for their halting
speech :

Humble lives, to low thought, and low ; but linked, to
the thinker's eye,
By a bond that is stronger than death, with the lights of
the farthest sky :

Here as there, the great drama of life rolled on, and a
jubilant voice
Thrilled through me ineffable, vast, and bade me exult
and rejoice ;

Exult and rejoice, oh soul ! sang my being to a mystical
hymn
As I passed by the cool bright wolds, as I threaded my
pinewoods dim ;

Rejoice and be sure ! as I passed to my fair home under
the hill,
Wrapt round with a happy content,—and the world and
my soul were still.

SONG.

BEAM on me, fair Ideal, beam on me !

Too long thou hast concealed thee in a cloud ;
Mine is no vision strong to pierce to thee,
Nor voice complaining loud,
Whereby thou mightest find thy dear, and come
To thine own heart, and long expecting home.

Too long thou dost withdraw thee from mine eyes ;
Too long thou lingerest. Ah, truant sweet !
Dost thou no reckoning take of all my sighs,
While Time with flying feet
Speeds onward, till the westering sun sinks low—
With cruel feet so swift and yet so slow ?

Time was I thought that thou wouldst come a maid
White-armed, with deep blue eyes and sunny head ;
But, ah ! too long the lovely vision stayed.
And then, when this was fled,
Fame, with blown clarion clear, and wide-spread wings,
Fame, crown and summit of created things.

And then in guise of Truth, when this grew faint,
Truth in Belief and Act, and Life and Thought,
White-robed and virginal, a pure cold saint,
Thou cam'st awhile, long sought ;
But only in glimpses camest thou, so I
Watch wearily until thou passest by.

I wait, I watch, I hunger, though I know
Thou wilt not come at all who stay'st so long.
My hope has lost its strength, my heart its glow ;
I grow too cold for song :
Long since I might have sung, hadst thou come then,
A song to echo through the souls of men.

Yet, since 'tis better far to dream in sleep,
Than wholly lose the treacheries of time,
I hold it gain to have seen thy garments sweep
On the far hills sublime :
Still will I hope thy glorious face to see,—
Beam on me, fair Ideal, beam on me !

AT LAST.

LET me at last be laid
On that hillside I know which scans the vale,
Beneath the thick yews' shade,
For shelter when the rains and winds prevail.
It cannot be the eye
Is blinded when we die,
So that we know no more at all
The dawns increase, the evenings fall ;
Shut up within a mouldering chest of wood
Asleep, and careless of our children's good.

Shall I not feel the spring,
The yearly resurrection of the earth,
Stir thro' each sleeping thing
With the fair throbbings and alarms of birth,
Calling at its own hour
On folded leaf and flower,
Calling the lamb, the lark, the bee,
Calling the crocus and anemone,
Calling new lustre to the maiden's eye,
And to the youth love and ambition high?

Shall I no more admire
The winding river kiss the daisied plain?
Nor see the dawn's cold fire
Steal downward from the rosy hills again?
Nor watch the frowning cloud,
Sublime with mutterings loud,
Burst on the vale, nor eves of gold,
Nor crescent moons, nor starlights cold,
Nor the red casements glimmer on the hill
At Yule-tides, when the frozen leas are still?

Or should my children's tread
Through Sabbath twilights, when the hymns are done,
Come softly overhead,
Shall no sweet quickening through my bosom run,
Till all my soul exhale
Into the primrose pale,
And every flower which springs above
Breathes a new perfume from my love;
And I shall throb, and stir, and thrill beneath
With a pure passion stronger far than death?

Sweet thought! fair, gracious dream,
Too fair and fleeting for our clearer view!
How should our reason deem
That those dear souls, who sleep beneath the blue
In rayless caverns dim,
'Mid ocean monsters grim,

Or whitening on the trackless sand,
Or with strange corpses on each hand
In battle-trench or city graveyard lie,
Break not their prison-bonds till time shall die?

Nay, 'tis not so indeed.
With the last fluttering of the failing breath
The clay-cold form doth breed
A viewless essence, far too fine for death ;
And ere one voice can mourn,
On upward pinions borne,
They are hidden, they are hidden, in some thin air,
Far from corruption, far from care,
Where through a veil they view their former scene,
Only a little touched by what has been.

Touched but a little ; and yet,
Conscious of every change that doth befall,
By constant change beset,
The creatures of this tiny whirling ball,
Filled with a higher being,
Dowered with a clearer seeing,
Risen to a vaster scheme of life,
To wider joys and nobler strife,
Viewing our little human hopes and fears
As we our children's fleeting smiles and tears.

Then, whether with fire they burn
This dwelling-house of mine when I am fled,
And in a marble urn
My ashes rest by my beloved dead,
Or in the sweet cold earth
I pass from death to birth,
And pay kind Nature's life-long debt
In heart's-ease and in violet—
In charnel-yard or hidden ocean wave,
Where'er I lie, I shall not scorn my grave.

SONG.

LOVE-SIGHS that are sighed and spent in vain,
Ah ! folly, folly,
Thou dost transmute into a precious pain,
Sweet melancholy.
Ah ! folly, folly,
Ah ! fair melancholy,
Sweeter by far thy mild remedial pain,
Than if fierce hope should rise and throb again.

High hopes of glory sunk to naught,
Ah ! folly, folly,

And deep perplexities of baffled thought
Thou healest, melancholy.
Ah ! folly, folly,
Ah ! sweet melancholy,
Thou dost bear with thee a balm unsought,
To heal the wounds of love and pride and thought.

Yet thou art a trivial cure for ill,
Pale melancholy,
Fitting best a feebler brain and will,
Ah ! folly, folly.
Ay, sweet melancholy,
Folly art thou, folly.
Who only may not trivial ills endure
Will in thy pharmacy repose his cure.

Since thou shalt not heal the wounds I know,
Pale melancholy,
I will seek if any comfort grow
In jovial folly,
Ah ! folly, folly,
Worse than melancholy,
No other cure there is for Fortune's smart
Than a soul self-contained, and a proud innocent heart!

THE DIALOGUE.

UNTO my soul I said,
 " Oh, vagrant soul !
When o'er my living head
 A few years roll,
Is't true that thou shalt fly
Far away into the sky,
Leaving me in my place
Alone with my disgrace ?

 " For thou wilt stand in the East,
 The night withdrawn,
White-robed as is a priest,
 At the door of dawn ;
While I within the ground,
In misery fast bound,
Shall lie, blind, deaf, and foul,
Since thou art fled, O soul."

Then said my soul to me :

“Thy lot is best ;
For thou shalt tranquil be,
Sunk deep in rest,
While naked I shall know
The intolerable glow
When as, the sun, shall rise
A fire in fiery skies.

“Thou shalt lie cool and dark,
Forgetting all ;
I shall float shamed and stark,
Till the sun fall :
Thou shalt be earth in earth,
Preparing for new birth ;
While me in the heaven fierce,
Pure glories fright and pierce.”

Then said I to my soul,
And she to me :
“Where'er life's current roll
We twain shall be,
Part here and part not here,
Partners in hope and fear,
Until, our exile done,
We meet at last in one.”

THE BIRTH OF VERSE.

BLIND thoughts which occupy the brain,
Dumb melodies which fill the ear,
Dim perturbations, precious pain,
A gleam of hope, a chill of fear,—
These seize the poet's soul, and mould
The ore of fancy into gold.

And first no definite thought there is
In all that affluence of sound,
Like those sweet formless melodies
Piped to the listening woods around,
By birds which never teacher had
But love and knowledge : they are glad.

Till, when the chambers of the soul
Are filled with inarticulate airs,
A spirit comes which doth control
The music, and its end prepares ;
And, with a power serene and strong,
Shapes these wild melodies to song.

Or haply, thoughts which glow and burn
Await long time the fitting strain,
Which, swiftly swelling, seems to turn
The silence to a load of pain ;
And somewhat in him seems to cry,
“ I will have utterance, or I die ! ”

Then of a sudden, full, complete,
The strong strain bursting into sound,
Words come with rhythmic rush of feet,
Fit music girds the language round,
And with a comeliness unsought,
Appears the winged, embodied thought.

But howsoever they may rise,
Fit words and music come to birth ;
There soars an angel to the skies,
There walks a Presence on the earth—
A something which shall yet inspire
Myriads of souls unborn with fire.

And when his voice is hushed and dumb,
The flame burnt out, the glory dead,
He feels a thrill of wonder come
At that which his poor tongue has said ;
And thinks of each diviner line—
“ Only the hand that wrote was mine.”

SONG.

OH ! were I rich and mighty,
With store of gems and gold,
And you, a beggar at my gate,
Lay starving in the cold ;
I wonder, could I bear
To leave you pining there ?

Or, if I were an angel,
And you an earth-born thing,
Beseeching me to touch you
In rising with my wing ;
I wonder should I soar
Aloft, nor heed you more ?

Or, dear, if I were only
A maiden cold and sweet,
And you, a humble lover,
Sighed vainly at my feet ;
I wonder if my heart
Would know no pain or smart ?

THE ENIGMA.

THE gaslights flutter and flare
On the cruel stones of the street,
And beneath in the sordid glare
Pace legions of weary feet ;
Fair faces that soon shall grow hard,
Shy glances already grown bold,
The wrecks of a girlhood marred
By shame and hunger and cold.

But here, as she passes along,
Is one whose young cheek still shows,
'Mid the pallid, pitiful throng,
The fresh bloom of a tender rose.
Not long has she walked with vice,
A recruit to the army of Ill,
A fresh lamb for the sacrifice
That steams up to Moloch still.

And the spell through which youth draws all,
The faint shyness in hurrying walk,
The lithe form slender and tall,
The soft burr in her simple talk,
Constrains the grave passer, whose brain
Is long leagues of fancy apart,
To thrill with a sudden pain
And an emptiness of heart.

Poor child ! since it is not long
Since you were indeed but a child,
A gay thing of bird-like song,
And even as a bird is wild ;
With no shadow of thought or care,
Laughing all the sweet hours away,
When every morning was fair,
And every season a May.

Through the red fallow on the hill
The white team laboured along,
While you roamed the green copses at will,
And mimicked the cuckoo's song ;
While they tossed and carried the hay,
While the reapers were hid in the wheat,
You had only to laugh and to play,
Or to bathe in the brook your feet.

For your mother left you a child,
Your rough father's pride and joy :
Rejoiced that his girl was as wild
And fearless as any boy.
Though you would not plunder the nest,
Nor harry the shrieking hare,
You could gallop bare-backed with the best,
And knew where the orchises were.

“ Like a boy ” was what they said,
With your straight limbs and fearless face ;
Like a girl in the golden head,
Gay fancies, and nameless grace.
Like a boy in high courage and all
Quick forces, and daring of will ;
Like a girl in the peril to fall,
And innocent blindness to ill.

And even now, on the sordid street,
As you pass by the theatre door,
You bring with you some freshness sweet
Of the brightness and breezes of yore.
Not yet are the frank eyes grown bold,
Not yet have they lost all their joy ;
Not yet has time taken the gold
From the short crisp curls of the boy.

And if truly a boy's they were,
Not thus would he pace forlorn ;
Nor would careless passers-by dare
To shoot out the lips of scorn.
Is it Nature or man that makes
An unequal judgment arraign
Those whose equal nature takes
The mark of the self-same stain ?

Leaving this one, shame and disgrace ;
Leaving that one, honour and fame ;
To this one, confusion of face,
To that one, a stainless name :
A high port and respect and wealth
For the one who is guilty indeed,
While the innocent walks by stealth
Through rough places with feet that bleed.

Do I touch a deep ulcer of Time,
A created or ultimate ill,
A primal curse or a crime,
Self-inflicted through ignorance still ?
But meanwhile, poor truant, you come
With a new face year after year,
Leaving innocence, freedom, and home
For these dens of weeping and fear.

To decline by a swift decay,
To a thing so low and forlorn,
That, for all your fresh beauty to-day,
It were better you never were born ;
Or to find in some rare-sent hour,
As a lily rooted in mire,
Love spring with its pure white flower
From the lowest depths of desire.

Heaven pity you ! So little turns
The stream of our lives from the right ;
So like is the flame that burns
To the hearth that gives warmth and light ;
So fine the impassable fence,
Set for ever 'twixt right and wrong,
Between white lives of innocence
And dark lives too dreadful for song.

TO THE TORMENTORS.

DEAR little friend, who, day by day,
Before the door of home
Art ready waiting till thy master come,
With monitory paw and noise,
Swelling to half delirious joys,
Whether my path I take
By leafy coverts known to thee before,
Where the gay coney loves to play,
Or the loud pheasant whirls from out the brake
Unharm'd by us, save for some frolic chase,
Or innocent panting race ;
Or who, if by the sunny river's side
Haply my steps I turn,
With loud petition constantly dost yearn
To fetch the whirling stake from the warm tide ;
Who, if I chide thee, grovellest in the dust,
And dost forgive me, though I am unjust,
Blessing the hand that smote : who with fond love
Gazest, and fear for me, such as doth move

Those finer souls which know, yet may not see,
And are wrapped round and lost in ecstasy ;—

And thou, dear little friend and soft,
Breathing a gentle air of hearth and home ;
Whose low purr to the lonely ear doth oft
With deep refreshment come ;
Though thy quick nature is not frank and gay
As that one's, yet with graceful play
Thou dost beguile the evenings, and dost sit
With mien demurely fit ;
With half-closed eyes, as in a dream
Responsive to the singing steam,
Most delicately clean and white,
Thou baskest in the flickering light ;
Quick-tempered art thou, and yet, if a child
Molest thee, pitiful and mild ;
And always thy delight is, simply neat,
To seat thee faithful at thy master's feet ;—

And thou, good friend and strong,
Who art the docile labourer of the world ;
Who groanest when the battle mists are curled
On the red plain ; who toilest all day long
To make our gain or sport ; who art the care
That cleanses idle lives, which, but for thee
And thy pure, noble nature, perhaps might sink
To lower levels, born of lust and drink,

And half-forgotten sloughs of infamy,
Which desperate souls could dare ;—
And ye, fair timid things, who lightly play
By summer woodlands at the close of day ;—
What are ye all, dear creatures, tame or wild ?
What other nature yours than of a child,
Whose dumbness finds a voice mighty to call,
In wordless pity, to the souls of all
Whose lives I turn to profit, and whose mute
And constant friendship links the man and brute ?
Shall I consent to raise
A torturing hand against your few and evil days ?

Shall I indeed delight
To take you, helpless kinsmen, fast and bound,
And while ye lick my hand
Lay bare your veins and nerves in one red wound,
Divide the sentient brain ;
And while the raw flesh quivers with the pain,
A calm observer stand,
And drop in some keen acid, and watch it bite
The writhing life : wrench the still beating heart,
And with calm voice meanwhile discourse, and bland,
To boys who jeer or sicken as they gaze,
Of the great Goddess Science and her gracious ways ?

Great Heaven ! this shall not be, this present hell,
And none denounce it ; well I know, too well,

That Nature works by ruin and by wrong,
Taking no care for any but the strong,
Taking no care. But we are more than she ;
We touch to higher levels, a higher love
Doth through our being move :
Though we know all our benefits bought by blood,
And that by suffering only reach we good ;
Yet not with mocking laughter, nor in play,
Shall we give death or carve a life away.

And if it be indeed
For some vast gain of knowledge, we might give
These humble lives that live,
And for the race should bid the victim bleed,
Only for some great gain,
Some counterpoise of pain ;
And that with solemn soul and grave,
Like his who from the fire 'scapes, or the flood,
Who would save ali, ay, with his heart's best blood,
But of his children chooses which to save !

Surely a man should scorn
To owe his weal to others' death and pain ?
Sure 'twere no real gain
To batten on lives so weak and so forlorn ?
Nor were it right indeed
'To do for others what for self were wrong.
'Tis but the same dead creed,
Preaching the naked triumph of the strong ;

And for this Goddess Science, hard and stern,
We shall not let her priests torment and burn :
We fought the priests before, and not in vain ;
And as we fought before, so will we fight again.

CHILDREN OF THE STREET.

BRIGHT boys vociferous,
Girl-children clamorous,
Shrill trebles echoing,
Down the long street ;
Every day come they there,
Afternoon foul or fair,
Shouting and volleying ;
Through wintry winds and cold,
Through summer eves of gold,
Running and clamouring :
Never a day but brings,
Ragged and thinly clad,
Battling with poverty,
Hunger, and wretchedness,
Brave little souls forlorn,
Gaining hard bread.

“Terrible accident ;
Frightful explosion, Sir ;
News from Australia,
News from America ;
Only one halfpenny,
Special edition, Sir,
Echo, Sir, *Echo* !”

Thus they shout breathlessly,
Dashing and hurrying,
Threading the carriages,
Under the rapid feet ;
Frightening the passer-by,
Down the long street :
On till they chance to meet
Some vague philosopher.

*

*

*

And straightway the hurry,
And bustle, and noise,
Fade away in his thought
Before tranquil joys.
Here are problems indeed,
Not to solve, it is true,
But on every side filling
The fanciful view ;
Which ere he has grasped them
Are vanished and gone,
But leave him in solitude
Never alone :

Thoughts of Fate, and of Life,
And the end of it all,
Of the struggle and strife
Where few rise, many fall ;
Thoughts of Country and Empire,
Of Future and Past,
And the centuries gliding
So slow, yet so fast :
Old fancies, yet strange,
Thoughts sad and yet sweet,
Of lives come to harvest,
And lives incomplete ;
Of the lingering march,
Of the Infinite plan,
Bringing slowly, yet surely,
The glory of man ;
Of our failures and losses,
Our victory and gain ;
Of our treasure of hope
And our Present of pain.
And, higher than all,
That these young voices teach
A glowing conviction
Too precious for speech ;
That somewhere down deep
In each natural soul
Sacred verities sleep,
Holy waterfloods roll ;

That to young lives untaught,
Without friend, without home
Some gleams of a light
That is heavenlier come ;
That to toil which is honest
A voice calls them still,
Which is more than the tempter's
And stronger than ill.

For, poor souls, 'twere better,
If pleasure were all,
Not to strive thus and labour,
But let themselves fall ;
They might gain, for a time,
Higher wages than this,
And that sharp zest of sinning
The innocent miss ;
They might know fuller life,
And, should fortune befriend,
Escape the Law's pains
From beginning to end ;
Or, if they should fail,
What for them does home bring
Which should make of a prison
So dreadful a thing?
These children, whom formalists,
Narrow and stern,
Have denied what high principle

Comes from to learn ;
To whom this great empire,
Whose records they cry,
Is a book sealed as close
As the ages gone by ;
Who bear a name great
Among nations of earth,
But are English alone
By the fortune of birth ;
These young mouths that come
To a board well-nigh bare,
Who elsewhere were riches,
But here a grave care.

Great Empire ! fast bound
By invisible bands,
That convey to earth's limits
Thy rulers' commands ;
Who sittest alone
By thy rude northern sea,
On an ocean-built throne,
The first home of the free,
Whom thy tall chimneys shroud
In a life-giving gloom ;
Who clothest mankind
With the work of thy loom ;
Who o'er all seas dost send out
Thy deep-laden ships ;

Who teachest all nations
The words of thy lips ;
Who despatchest thy viceroys
Imperially forth
To the palms of thy East
And the snows of thy North ;
Who holdest vast empires
Of dark subtle men
By the might of just laws
And the sword of the pen ;
Who art planted wherever
A white foot may tread,
On the poisonous land
Which for ages lies dead ;
Who didst nourish the freeman
With milk from thy breast,
To the measureless Commonwealth
Lording the West ;
Who holdest to-day
Of those once subject lands
A remnant too mighty
For weaklier hands ;
Who in thy isle-continent,
Yearly increased,
Rearest empires of freemen
To sway the far East ;
Who art set on lone islets
Of palm and of spice,

On deserts of sand
And on mountains of ice ;
Who bring'st Freedom wherever
Thy flag is unfurled :
The exemplar, the envy,
The crown of the World !

What is't thou dost owe
To these young lives of thine,
What else but to foster
This dim spark divine ?
Think of myriads like these
Without teaching or home,
Who with pitiful accents
Beseeching thee come ;
Think how Time, whirling on,
Time that never may rest,
Brings the strength of the loins
And the curve of the breast,
Till, with poor minds still childish,
These children are grown
To the age that shall give them
Young lives of their own ;
Think of those, who to-day
In the sweet country air
Live, as soulless, almost,
As the birds which they scare ;
Think of all those for whom,

To the immature brain,
The dull whirr of the loom
Brings a throbbing of pain ;
Think of those poor lives fallen
Which never shall rise,
For the lack of the warning
Their country denies,—
Fallen, ruined, and lost,
Through all time that shall be,
Fallen for ever and lost
To themselves and to thee ;—
Thou who standest, girt round
By strong foes on each side,
Foes who envy thy greatness,
Thy glory, thy pride ;
Thou, who surely shalt need
Heart and soul, brain and hand,
Brain to plan, hand to bleed,
For thy might, O dear land !

* * * *

Till, while slowly he ponders
These thoughts in his brain,
See ! there swiftly comes rushing
A young troop again.

“ Terrible accident ;
Frightful explosion, Sir ;

News, Sir, from Germany ;
Latest from India ;
Special edition, Sir,
Only one half-penny !”
Thus the revolute
Assonant *Echo*.

Again they rush breathlessly ;
Dashing and hurrying,
Frighting the passer-by,
Shouting and volleying,
Bright boys vociferous,
Girl-children clamorous,
On till they meet again
Some vague philosopher.

AN ODE TO FREE ROME.

LEAF, all ye seven hills ; be glad, O hallowed ground,
Built up of ruin through the infinite years ;
Be glad, and let the sound
Of joy arise, of joy unmixed with tears,
Till all the sacred dust beneath
Quickened from out the grasp of death,
And Kingdom, Commonwealth, and Empire, each,
The will to govern and the brain to teach,
Warrior and jurist, and the eloquent tongue,
The plastic hand of art, the holy fire of song,
Live once again, if ever they were dead :
For now the night is past, the dawn is come,
The strength of evil spent, the black dream fled,
After the age-long gloom the heavens grow red,
Man, exiled long, turns to his ancient home :
Once more, with longing hearts, the nations yearn ;
Once more they call, with lips and eyes that burn,
Thy name, regenerate Rome !

Old art thou, Rome, and worn :
So old that scarce our eyes can trace
The sum of centuries on thy face :
So thick beneath thy soil the empires lie
That Heaven's own air above thee seems to die ;
And on thy plains forlorn
By night the plague-mist broods with ghastly breath,
And the chill leprous vapours settle down
Even to the shrunken limits of the town :
Old art thou, and to-day thy Romans dwell
Nestling within the broken shell
Of palace and of temple, and the hand
Of cunning, vanished skill, shines through the wall
Of humble hovels tottering to their fall ;
And oft the delvers 'mid thy ruins start
To see some breathing miracle of art ;
And fair tall columns stand,
Amid the sordid present, like the ghost ;
Showing from out the meanness of to-day,
The high hope sunk, the ruin, the decay ;
Of some once great ideal spent and lost.

Thou wert not pure nor good,
O Rome, in those great days our hearts recall.
On violence thy growing power was built,
On violence and guilt ;
The simpler lives that made thy Commonwealth
The general sober health,

Were lived for power, and that through weary time
The triumph to the Capitol might climb,
With Death in its train ; and long before thy fall
Thy sated eyes were daily drunk with blood,
Thy pitiless hands were busy with scourge and chain.
A proud cold mistress wert thou, stern and grave,
Trampling out life and freedom from thy slave,
Till the rude wild barbarians, one by one,
Lost the fair pride and vigour of the free,
And for their gods took luxury and thee.
And ere thy race was run
Thy mailed legions, speeding fast and far,
O'er land and sea had borne the blight of war,
Till the world lay asleep,
And one foul canker of ignoble peace
Consumed thee, slow and deep ;
And amid dreamy languors of delight,
And hot red flushes mixt of lust and blood,
Rose-crowned thou satest, thy weary eyes aglow
With death-throes of the nude young limbs below :
And fierce prætorians hurling down
The hardly conquered blood-stained crown ;
And poison and plot, and nameless sloughs of sin.
These were the joys thou gavest thy soul to win ;
These the dead centuries brought, nor seemed as they
would cease.'

And then thou wert divided, and the rude

Fierce savage from the boundless plains laid bare
Thy fertile fields, and the slow-stealing tide
Of ruin, oft beat back, broke high and higher
And low and lower ; like a dying fire
Thy empire sank, till sink it might no more.
And after long, long years
Of rapine and of tears,
Thou, the corrupt, the lewd,
Forgetting all thy life that was before,
The guilty, gave thy harlot limbs to wear
The white robes of the saintly crucified ;
And with vain sacrifice and heathen rite,
And re-established idols, and the steam
Of thy discarded censers, thou didst turn,
The God-sent words that burn,
The pure commands of light,
Into a sickly sensual dream ;
And over all the past
Didst such strange glamour cast,
That thou, who once wert drunk with blood of saint
And martyr—thou, who once didst flout and scorn
The grand old kingdoms not of thee,
Didst stoop to bend a lowly knee
To a poor fisher, Hebrew born.
Him by a foolish fable didst thou take
For priest and ruler ; and, with craft to make
All things thy own, once more thou didst regain
Thy old bad rule ; and threats of pain

And promise ; bound with fierce constraint
Thy savage conquerors, till thou cam'st to be
The mistress of the world, the foe of all the free

And then, oh Rome,
Began thy worst abasement ; for till now
Thy vices were the vices of the strong,--
Thy life as theirs in whom the tide
Runs over-strong, and the hot pride
Of life and all its fires so fiercely glow,
That scarce amid the tumult and the throng
They hear the sweet old voices come,
Telling of innocence and home.
For always 'mid the turmoil and the din
Of passion and the long laborious sin
Pure voices rose : sweet bursts of song
Sage words of wisdom, histories fair,
Immortal codes of laws, which still
Downward the grateful centuries bear,
Rhetoric which shall scarcely die,
Philosophies remote and high,
And breathing art ; and through the long
Ages, one firm unswerving will
Moulding the world, till man became
Roman in soul and name.

But now thou knew'st to take
Another form of rule, and thou, who erst

Didst march with mail-clad warriors, battling down
Opposing wills, and first among the first,
Won'st from a conquered world the hard-earned crown,
Now like a cold black snake

Around the blighted souls of men didst glide,
And with feigned messages of doom,
And monstrous fable and immoral threat,
A womanish, subtle conqueror, didst set
Thy foot upon mankind ; nor trick, nor cheat,
Nor secret craft, nor wile, nor dark deceit,
Nor hypocrite pretence didst leave untried,
Nor thought nor deed of gloom.

Thy empire thou didst base on groans and sighs
Of lifelong captives shut from life and love,
And at thy bidding all the sacred ties
Of home thou didst unloosen and remove
All thought but thought for thee. So didst thou
build

Thy throne on suffering ; while thy pontiffs sate
'Mid well-carved nymphs and pictures fair,
And pagan joyance everywhere,
And made their atheist fancies bold
With philosophic sneers of old,
As the augurs did ; and in the sacred name
Of God, careless, and flushed with wine, they filled
The sanctuary with revel, and the shame
Of lust of power and greed insatiate ;
And scoffed at Christ, and mocked the zeal

Of those too faithful souls and pure,
Whom faster far than chains or steel
Their high religion could immure,
And who from convent prisons sad,
Their impious feasts made glad.

Or these lewd triflers passed ; and then,
Worse tyranny of purer men,
Stern zealots who, believing, sought
To kill the sacred life of thought
By scourge, and chain, and axe, and stake,
And o'er mind's seething ocean spread
Such calm as when the winds are dead ;
And not in vain, for year by year,
Brought low by horrid chills of fear,
The world's high pulse beat weak and faint,
Till lying vision of sickly saint
And fabulous dogma could replace
The Pagan tenderness and grace.
And o'er all lands thy priests swarmed far and near,
Close to the blood-stained rulers' dying ear,
With venal gloss for unrepented sin,
And secret absolution ; and did win
The credulous faith of woman ; and if e'er
Some bolder soul, grown jealous, turned to God
From all thy forgeries, it with dreadful fear,
And chain, and dungeon, and the iron rod,
And blood and fire, thou didst subdue

To thine own ends, and with a hideous skill
Thou madest the whole world bow before thy will,
Till thy vast fable grew
To a black nightmare, blighting heart and soul ;
And ever with thy prisons filled with pain,
And thy dark shadow, blasting the world's brain,
So long time did the weary centuries roll,
And thou didst wax and batten on the blood
Of the innocent and good.

And then there came
Another dawn with thunders, and the flame
Of its red lightning flashed from soul to soul,
And thought a waking giant rose and broke
Thy hateful bonds, and soared to heaven and spoke
The godlike words which erst thou didst control :
And the dread salutary storm of war
Burst o'er unhappy Europe far ;
And the brave North from out its cold
Gray, frozen plains rushed forth to meet
The Pagan South, which at thy feet
Had spent its manhood : and the bold
High soul of England, she who sate
Behind her sea-cliffs isolate :
These spurned thy hateful yoke and thee,
And, taking heart, grew great and free,
And overspread the world ; but thou,
Knowing the voice of doom,

Ruthless, with fire and sword didst trample out
The nascent soul within thee, and enslave
The whole fair South in blackest depths of gloom.
There, in an ignorance too dark for doubt,
And a worse death than that which feeds the grave,
Thou didst engulf her. There did she remain,
Dead, while life surged around her ; joy, and pain,
High hopes and aspirations, all forgot.
There, chained to earth, the nations grovelled and were not,
And there some grovel now.

Ah ! glorious city, what pangs were thine
In those long shameful years !
Cold as a corpse round which the graveclothes twine,
Thou drank'st the cup of tears ;
Thy vesture they divided, and did tear
In sunder thy own Italy, fair and sweet.
And thou could'st bear
To see her trampled under alien feet !
Sometimes thy sons, filled with such holy fire
As in all time doth patriot hearts inspire,
Would rear thy fallen Commonwealth once more
In vain, or else by burning words would strive
To make the dry bones of thy Empire live ;
And then time fled, and voice and arm would fail,
And death and silence reign. The day of doom,
Which touched the souls of men with tongues of flame,
Broke not on thee. Upon thy living tomb

Of that great travail whence the freeman came,
Stole but a passing murmur, quickly gone ;
And then thy hateful life crept smoothly on,
Untroubled, as before. The tyrants slew
And worked their selfish schemes of petty wrong
Upon thy Italy, yet no lightning flash
Shot from thy eyes, O mighty mother, to dash
The spoiler to the earth ; for thou wast bound
In womanish fetters : sunk so sad, so deep,
In such a lifeless lethargy profound,
That no cry came to break thy shameful sleep :
So well thy crafty guardians knew
To stop thy ears ; while to the far
Dim ends of earth they stretched their hands,
Armed with all pitiless commands,
And mental tortures worse than death,
And sad confessions wrung from failing breath,
And stamped out thought, and strove to still
The world's great tumult to their will,
And in this shameful mould recast
Thy illimitable Past !

Slow is God's purpose deep,
And slow the cycles creep
To the full end ; and we who know
Fruitless the long years come and go,
Fruitless the brief lives lived and spent
To change the old wrong impotent ;

Who, while we hopeless droop and fade
Beneath thick Error's poison shade,
See it to glorious stature rise,
And lose its summit in the skies—
See a false halo shed round crime,
And error consecrate by time
Grow weary of delay, and fain
The eternal purpose to arraign.
Ah ! blind and weak of faith ; for see,
When least we think the thing shall be,
By secret ways remote and still
Fares on the one unchanging will,
By trackless paths ; in seasons known
By one intelligence alone ;
And oft, when least we heed or think,
Our footsteps tremble on the brink :
And often, when we seem to hold
The future, with its store of gold,
Lo ! quick the fairy gleam is gone,
And leaves us hopeless and alone.

And so with thee :

The furious storm of change had passed once more
And left thee as before.

There seemed no shadow on the glaring sky,
No little cloud which any might descry ;
A time no more of wild imaginings ;
A time of mistresses and kings,

Secret police, confessors, Bourbons, spies,
Dark prisons filled with patriot sighs :
Rome basking, with her vulture wings outspread,
As if all nobler thoughts and dreams were dead ;
O'er all our Europe not a breath or stir
But foul intrigue of king and minister,—
One deep corruption to replace
The kindly ties of common race.
Secure thou seem'dst of ruin, ay, secure •
But, God be praised, not sure.

For lo ! from out that calm and silence deep,
A loud and bitter cry !
Europe, awaking from her nightmare sleep,
Lifted her voice on high ;
And the peoples who long time had crouched before
That subtle deadly yoke,
Had risen again, had risen and once more
The voice of freedom spoke,—
Whispered first with a low unmeaning murmur ;
Then, 'mid fire and cannon smoke,
Spoke out loud, as, with hand and voice grown firmer
The Revolution woke.
And over many a fair and stately city
The fiend of civil strife,
Drunk with conquest, blind to reverence, dead to pity,
Rose to an awful life,—
Rose till all our Europe, trodden under

The thing the priests had wrought,
Rang with confused unmeaning thunder
Of inarticulate thought ;
And the lonely dreamer, stern and crimson-handed,
And the patriot mad with hope,
And the zealot and the socialist, commanded
More than Emperor or Pope ;
And they seized thee, and with joy and exultation
Baptized thee, Commonwealth ;
While thy Pontiff, long perplexed 'twixt Church and
nation,
Slunk out of thee by stealth ;
Till the legions of thy sister, France the glorious—
She who once awoke the world—
Over liberty and commonwealth victorious,
Against thy life were hurled ;
And thou sankest down at last, though battling bravely
For the freedom thou hadst won ;
Never losing heart, but striving sternly, gravely,
Till hope and life were done ;
And o'er every race, from Germany enlightened
To God-forgotten Spain,
The chains of the oppressor's hand were tightened,
The fetters forged again ;
Once more the informer ruled, the sleek confessor
Sate by the ear of kings ;
A nightmare on the race, a dark assessor
Prompting to shameful things :

"All things are mine," the priest said ; "I am master
Of poms, and thrones, and powers :"
Nor marked the shadow ever gliding faster
Of the inexorable hours !

For slowly in Time's hidden womb
Fate's secret forces did mature,
The silent energies obscure
The destinies of doom ;
And tiny Piedmont, set beneath the mountain
To one foreseeing brain
Seemed the prime source, the fair upspringing foun-
tain

Of Italy again.

And craft, than priestcraft subtler still,
And cunning and unswerving will,
These worked in silence long ; and then
The rash Triumvir, king of men,
The Roman without stain or guile,
Rushed from his rocky sea-girt isle.
And thy frank monarch marched, and he
Who France enslaved but made thee free,
And chased the spoiler out and broke his power,
And drove him, beaten back, to fort and tower :
And thou, rich Lombardy, wert free.
And over thee, fair 'Tuscany,
The onward flowing tide of freedom broke,
And kingdom after kingdom woke,

Till last on thee, O sweet South, bound
In utter darkness, prisoned and confined,
There broke with high tumultuous sound
An echo of the mighty northern wind :
Again the red-clad dreamer rose
And rushed unarined upon his foes,
And did prevail—such strength there is in faith—
And did prevail !

And all the dark and hateful things that be,
All gyves and instruments of tyranny,
Fell from thy limbs and left thee free ;
And at thy prison gate
And hideous, rayless cell,
No more the gaoler sate,
Making the Paradise God made, a hell.
And all was free through Italy, free, free !
From thy cold Alp to burning Sicily :
Free everywhere, O Rome, except for thee
And thy gray, silent Venice weeping by the sea !

And then thy force seemed spent again,
O Italy, and the slow crawling years
Deferred thy fulness, till thy growing pain
Prompted rash onsets checked in blood and tears ;
Yet, through defeat thou didst advance and gain
Thy Venice, and through defeat
And agony of Mentana didst advance
To destiny complete,

Till thy too jealous sister, France—
She who with foreign fanatic and fool
Did buoy thy oppressor's rule—
She, by strong blows from the victorious North,
Broken and crushed, and sunk in ruin, fell ;
And, with her trumpets sounding the swift knell
Of priestcraft, Italy marched forth,
And the priests' hirelings shrank and were afraid :
And strong and calm, and gloriously arrayed,
Thou sawest her conquering legions come ;
And not in battle guise, or hasty strength,
But after patient waiting, and at length,
Thy Italy came home !

And time it was indeed
She came ; ay, it was time ; for scarce had ceased
The boldest utterance that ever priest
Had launched against our race.
Ay ! it was time indeed.
Scarce had the echoes died within the hall,
Where the weird power which tottered to its fall
Spake forth with voice and threat more bold
Than ever furious Pontiff launched of old,—
Spake forth amid the sycophant crowd,
The Jesuit suborned from every clime,
The stolid Eastern left behind of time,
The supple Italian mad for place ;
And those, the shame of every freer race,

Who come to hate the liberty they know,
And thoughts and lives that grow ;
Who into freemen's gatherings slip—
Smooth actors false, who play their part
With tolerance upon the lip
And tyranny at heart.
All these, and more, were there ;
And with intrigue, and trick, and wile,
Did each indignant soul beguile,
Till the mild zealot of the pagan chair
Stood forth amid the thunder and the flame ;
Stood forth—oh, blasphemy and shame !—
Infallible—oh, mighty mocking name !—
Infallible o'er peoples and o'er kings,
Infallible o'er earthly thoughts and things.
Too late to stay the madness and the crime,
Thou camest, O Italy. Ay, 'twas time, 'twas time !

Yes ! it was time.

And now a Rome regenerate once more
Amid her queenly cities sits sublime :
Fair Venice, fresh like Cypris from the seas ;
Ravenna, dim with hoary memories ;
Milan, with spires of marble clustering white ;
Genoa, on terraced hill-sides clear and bright ;
Florence, the flower of cities ; and thou, fair town,
On the blue crescent of whose bay,
Though dynasties and nations pass away,

The burning hill looks down
That whelmed thy sisters ;—these
And others, twinkling, like the Pleiades
'Mid the large stars, with gems of form and hue
Fairer than e'er thy ancient Romans knew,
Kneel round thee where thou sittest as a Queen,
Re-clothed with all the glories that have been.

The glories? Yes, but not the might.
That to the colder North has flown,
To where she lieth—she,
The little Island under grayer light,
'Mid loud perpetual surges of the sea,
By boisterous winds o'erblown,
Seated upon two hemispheres, and can teach,
As thou couldst once, a universal speech ;
Or to the vast and thinly-peopled West,
Unknown to thee, where humble homes are blest
With deep content and plenty, though the State
Grow rotten ; or, it may be, to the great
Vast form which broods o'er Europe like a cloud,
As did thy Goths ; or, maybe, to the strong,
Stern race of banded freemen, which grows free
Through bonds, and, gaining freedom, set thee free :
Heirs of thy mail-clad legions gone before.
Ah ! mockery, that Time can do no more !
Ay ! the long centuries mock us as they roll ;
And we, we cannot tell

To what far goal fares on the world's great soul,
Whether to ill or well.
Art thou indeed, black ghost,
For ever taken from our eyes and fled,
Among the hateful growths long lapsed and lost,
Which now are sunk and dead?
Or shalt thou from the coward fears of men
Who hear the Atheist bray,
And morbid doubters doubting heaven away,
Grow strong to blight again?
Or shall a happier fate, great Church of old,
The hidden riches of thy life unfold—
Great Church which men have strangled!—till we see
What sacred treasures, more than gems and gold,
What power of faith and ordered liberty,
Thy nursing arms enfold?
Grant it, O saints on earth and saints above,
Who have made pure her foulness with your love;
Grant it, pale monks, who from dim convent room
Saw angels through the gloom;—
Grant it, sweet ministering women; all
Who raised, who raise to-day, the feet that fall;
Who for fair works of mercy live,
To pray, to work, to succour, and to give;—
And ye limners who saw the mother mild
Adore the Eternal Child,
Grant it, if e'er to mortal prayer 'tis given
To speed the will of Heaven;—

Grant that from out all changes there may come
A new, regenerate Rome !

We know not, but 'tis clear
Her old dominion comes not, and 'tis well ;
For maybe, in some happy future near,
Or maybe distant, comes a newer birth,
A peaceful federation of the earth :
Who shall discern or tell ?
Is it a dream ? But in thy Senate, Rome,
Which was a dream, a dreamer sits to-day—
Two there were once, but one has passed away ;
The mightier, amid the happy dead
He dreams not any more—
And one there is who bends a whitened head,
A happy dreamer, who fulfilled his dream,
And has attained his home,
And dreams to-day of Tiber's deepened stream
White with the sails of yore ;
And dreams along thy poisoned, lonely plain—
The work of long neglect and of the priest—
The sounds of happy toil which long have ceased,
The vine and corn again ;
The peace, the plenty, which thy Romans knew ;
The glory, not the dominance of old ;
The waving wheat, or maize with sheen of gold ;
And, where the robber lurks upon the hill,
Again the purple clusters fill :

Science to knit a long-dissevered race,
And mild-eyed, gradual knowledge to efface,
By tranquil method subtly strong,
The centuries of ignorance and wrong ;
The priest no ruler, but a friend
To guide the feeble feet that heavenward tend ;
Leaving, in place of his old rule,
The simple teaching of the school,
The vespers in the twilights dim,
The children's voices in the innocent hymn,
The blessed, saintly souls which take
A life of pity for their Master's sake,
A fuller life than that the Pagan knew ;
O dreamer, dream thy dream, and dream it true !



SOULS IN PRISON.

I THOUGHT that I looked on the land of the lost,
A stony desert, arid and bare,
Gray under a heavy air.

Not a bird was there, nor a flower, nor a tree,
Nor rushing river, nor sounding sea ;
And I seemed to myself like a ghost.

A land of shadows, a herbless plain,
A faint light aslant on the barren ground,
And never a sight nor a sound :

Only at times, of invisible feet,
Wearily tracking one dull, sad beat,
Too spiritless to complain ;

And of faces hid by a blank white mask,
From which there glared out cavernous eyes,
Full of hate and revolt and lies :

As if the green earth on which others live
Had nothing of hope or of fear to give
But a hopeless, perpetual task.

Far in the distance a vast grey pile
Stretched out its spider-like, echoing ways
In long centrifugal rays ;

And sometimes dimly I seemed to see
Dumb gangs of poor workers, fruitlessly
Bent in hard tasks useless and vile,

To which, issuing silent, in single rank,
Along narrow pathways stony and blank
The hopeless toilers would come.

Or else each was idly cooped in a cell
Narrow, and gloomy, and hard, as hell,
Which was all that they knew of home.

And around them frowning, grimy and tall,
With no ivy or lichen, a circling wall
Shut God and life utterly out ;

And in the midst, with unclosing eye,
A muffled watcher stood silently,
As they paced about and about.

Never alone—for, wherever they went,
From some central tower an eye was bent
Along all the long, straight-drawn ways.

Never alone—for an unseen eye,
As the stealthy footstep went noiselessly by,
Swept each lonely cell with its gaze.

Always alone—for in all the throng
No word or glance as they shuffled along
But the order-word, sharp and loud.

Always alone—for in all the crowd
No glance of comfort from pitying eyes
Might pierce through the thick disguise.

Nor, if husband were there, or child, or wife,
Could the subtle communion of love and life
Escape that terrible eye.

Yet husbands and wives and children there were,
Young limbs, and age bent in a dumb despair,
Too strong or too weak to die.

Nothing remained, as it seemed, but thought
Of the old hopes vanished and come to nought,
And the hopeless, perpetual care,—

Nought but to sit, as the night would fall,
Tracing black ghosts on the blank white wall
In a silent rage of despair ;

Or, before the dull daylight began to break,
To start at the iron-tongued summons and wake
To the curse of another day.

And so, in silence, to brood and plot
To regain the poor freedom and life which were not.
Though it bartered a soul away ;

Or, later, to cherish the old offence
With a secret lurking devil of sense,
And a spring of desire self-bent,

Till at last all longing was sunk and spent
In a lifeless, fathomless slough of content.
Not repentance, nor fear, nor grief,

Nor belief at all, nor yet unbelief;
But a soul which skulks from itself like a thief,
And is damned for ever and dead.

* * * * *

Thus I thought to myself; and, though straight I saw
It was only the house of retributive Law,
I shuddered and shrank, and fled.



A SEPARATION DEED.

WHEREAS we twain, who still are bound for life,
Who took each other for better and for worse,
Are now plunged deep in hate and bitter strife,
And all our former love is grown a curse ;
So that 'twere better, doubtless, we should be
In loneliness, so that we were apart,
Nor in each other's changed eyes looking, see
The cold reflection of an alien heart :
To this insensate parchment we reveal
Our joint despair, and seal it with our seal.

Forgetting the dear days not long ago,
When we walked slow by starlight through the corn ;
Forgetting, since our hard fate wills it so,
All but our parted lives and souls forlorn ;
Forgetting the sweet fetters strong to bind
Which childish fingers forge and baby smiles,
Our common pride to watch the growing mind,
Our common joy in childhood's simple wiles,
The common tears we shed, the kiss we gave,
Standing beside the open little grave ;

Forgetting these and more, if to forget
Be possible, as we would fain indeed.
And if the past be not too deeply set
In our two hearts, with roots that, touched, will bleed ;
Yet, could we cheat by any pretext fair
'The world, if not ourselves—'twere so far well—
We would not put our bonds from us, and bare
To careless eyes the secrets of our hell ;
So this indenture witnesseth that we,
As follows here, do solemnly agree.

We' will take each our own, and will abide
Separate from bed and board for all our life ;
Whatever chance of weal or woe betide,
Naught shall re-knit the husband and the wife.
Though one grow gradually poor and weak,
The other, lapt in plenty, will not heed ;
Though one, in mortal pain, the other seek,
The other may not answer to the need ;
We, who through long years did together rest
In wedlock, heart to heart, and breast to breast.

One shall the daughter take, and one the boy,—
Poor boy, who shall not hear his mother's name,
Nor feel her kiss ; poor girl, for whom the joy
Of her sire's smile is changed for sullen shame :
Brother and sister, who, if they should meet,
With faces strange, amid the careless crowd,

Will feel their hearts beat with no quicker beat,
Nor inward voice of kinship calling loud :
Two widowed lives, whose fulness may not come ;
Two orphan lives, knowing but half of home.

We have not told the tale, nor will, indeed,
Of dissonance, whether cruel wrong or crime,
Or sum of petty injuries which breed
The hate of hell when multiplied by time,
Dishonour, falsehood, jealous fancies, blows,
Which in one moment wedded souls can sunder ;
But, since our yoke intolerable grows,
Therefore we set our seals and souls as under :
Witness the powers of wrong and hate and death,
And this indenture also witnesseth.

SONG.

THEY mount from glory to glory,
They sink from deep unto deep,
They proclaim their sweet passionate story,
They tremble on chords that weep,
And with them my soul spreads her wings,
And my heart goes out to them and sings.

And chord into chord interlaces,
Like the leaves that protect some fair bloom ;
And with subtle and tremulous graces,
And tender lights dappled with gloom,
Like the fall of an ocean-borne bell,
The harmonies quicken and swell.

Then swift from those languishing voices
And accents which marry and die,
Like the sound of a trumpet, rejoices
One clear note unfaltering, high,
And my soul, through its magical power,
Bursts and dies like an aloe in flower.

FREDERIC.

As these sheets came in from the printer,
My lad who had brought me them said,
“ Please, Sir, as I passed his office,
They told me that Frederic was dead.”

And I knew in a moment thrill through me,
First a keen little pang and smart,
Then a sudden revolt and rebellion
Seize on me and fill my heart,

As he went on with boyish prattle,
Before I had courage to speak :
“ He died of consumption, they said, Sir ;
And he earned sixteen shillings a week.”

“ How old was he ? ” “ Just seventeen, Sir :
He had grown very tall and white.”
And I thought of the childish features,
The bright cheeks, and eyes still more bright,

When, withdrawn from his school far too early,
He came with his treasured prize,
To show to his new-found master,
With a simple pride in his eyes ;

And how it soon proved that his writing
Was so clear, and skilful, and fine,
That I set him the task to decipher
The hieroglyphs which are mine.

'Twas four years ago, and so splendid
Did my first book of songs appear,
'That, though oftentimes already rejected,
I sent them forth then without fear.

Nor in vain. And now many friends know them,
And critics are kindly in praise,
But the cold little hand that adorned them
Has cast up the sum of its days !

Sixteen shillings ! this pittance could purchase
The flower of those boyish years !
This could give to that humble ambition
Dull entries, whose total is tears !

Poor young life which was bursting to blossom,
Which had borne its own fruitage one day,
Had those budding years mingled together
Slow labour with healthfuller play !

Is it man that has done this, or rather,
These dead blasts that blow, blow, blow, blow,
Week by week, month by month, till beneath them
Life withers and pulses beat slow?

The dull winds that to-day are slaying
Young and old with their poisonous breath,
Which slew the rash singer who praised them,
Not the less with a premature death.

Is it man with bad laws and fools' customs,
False pride, poverty, ignorant greed?
Is it God making lives for His pleasure,
Dooms these innocent victims to bleed?

Great riddle which one day shall be clearer,
Be our doubts with all reverence said;
But a strong power constrained me to write them.
When I heard little Frederic was dead.



TO MY MOTHERLAND.

DEAR motherland, forgive me, if too long
I hold the halting tribute of my song ;
Letting my wayward fancy idly roam
Far, far from thee, my early home.
There are some things too near,
Too infinitely dear
For speech ; the old ancestral hearth,
The hills, the vales that saw our birth,
Are hallowed deep within the reverent breast :
And who of these keeps silence, he is best.

Yet would not I appear,
Who have known many a brighter land and sea
Since first my boyish footsteps went from thee,
The less to hold thee dear ;
Or lose in newer beauties the immense
First love for thee, O birth-land, which fulfils

My inmost heart and soul,—
Love for thy smiling and sequestered vales,
Love for thy winding streams which sparkling roll
Through thy rich fields, dear Wales,
From long perspectives of thy folded hills.

Ay ! these are sacred, all ;
I cannot sing of them, too near they are.
What if from out thy dark yews, gazing far,
I sat and sang, Llangunnor ! of the vale
Through which fair Towy winds her lingering fall,
Gliding by Dynevor's wood-crowned steep,
And, alternating swift with deep,
By park and tower a living thing
Of loveliness meandering ;
And traced her flowing, onward still,
By Grongar dear to rhyme, or Dryslwyn's castled hill.
Till the fresh upward tides prevail,
Which stay her stream and bring the sea-borne sail,
And the broad river rolls majestic down
Beneath the gray walls of my native town.

Would not my fancy quickly stray
To thee, sea-girt St. David's, far away,
A minster on the deep ; or, further still,
To you, grand mountains, which the stranger knows :
Eryri throned amid the clouds and snows,
The dark lakes, the wild passes of the north ;

Or Cader, a stern sentinel looking forth
Over the boisterous main ; or thee, dear Isle
Not lovely, yet which canst my thought beguile—
Mona, from whose fresh wind-swept pastures came
My grandsire, bard and patriot, like in name
Whose verse his countrymen still love to sing
At bidding-feast or rustic junketing ?

Ah, no ! too near for song, and ye too near,
My brethren of the ancient race and tongue ;
The bardic measures deep, the sweet songs sung
At congresses, which fan the sacred fire
Which did of old your ancestors inspire ;
The simple worship sternly pure,
The faith unquestioning and sure,
Which doth the priest despise and his dark ways,
And riseth best to fullest praise
Beneath some humble roof-tree, rude and bare,
Or through the mountains' unpolluted air ;
Who know not violence nor blood,
And who, if sometimes ye decline from good,
Sin the soft sins which gentler spirits move,
Which warmer Fancy breeds, and too much love.

I may not sing of you,
Or tell my love—others there are who will,
Who haply bear not yet a love so true
As that my soul doth fill—

If to applause it lead, or gain, or fame ;
Better than this it were to bear the pain
Which comes to higher spirits when they know
They fire in other souls no answering glow ;
Love those who love me not again,
And leave my country naught, not even a name.



THE EPIC OF HADES.

BOOK II.*



OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

“Fresh, picturesque, and by no means deficient in intensity; but the most conspicuous merits of the author are the judgment and moderation with which his poem is designed, his self-possession within his prescribed limits, and the unfailing elegance of his composition, which shrinks from obscurity, exuberance, and rash or painful effort as religiously as many recent poets seem to cultivate such interesting blemishes. . . . Perhaps the fine bursts of music in Marsyas, and the varied emotions portrayed in Andromeda, are less characteristic of the author than the prompt, yet graceful, manner in which he passes from one figure to another. . . . Fourteen of these pieces written in blank verse which bears comparison with the very best models make up a thoroughly enjoyable little volume. . . . Fully suited to maintain and crown the reputation the author has acquired by those which have preceded it.”—*Pall Mall Gazette*, March 10th, 1876.

“It is natural that the favourable reception given to his ‘Songs of Two Worlds’ should have led the author to continue his poetical exercises, and it is, no doubt, a true instinct which has led him to tread the classic paths of song. In his choice of subject he has not shrunk from venturing on ground occupied by at least two Victorian poets. In neither case need he shrink from comparison. His Marsyas is full of fine fancy and vivid description. His Andromeda has to us one recommendation denied to Kingsley’s—a more congenial metre; another is its unstrained and natural narrative.”—*Saturday Review*, May 20th, 1876.

* Book II. was issued as a separate volume prior to the publication of Books I. and III. and of the complete work.

"In his enterprise of connecting the Greek myth with the high and wider meaning which Christian sentiment naturally finds for it, his success has been great. The passage in which Apollo's victory over Marsyas and its effect are described is full of exquisite beauty. It is almost as fine as verse on such a subject could be. . . . The little volume is delightful reading. From the first line to the last, the high and delicate aroma of purity breathes through the various spiritual fables."—*Spectator*, May 27th, 1876.

"The blank verse is stately, yet sweet, free, graceful, and never undignified. We could have well wished that space had permitted us to make extracts. We confidently believe that our readers will agree with us in regarding this as one of the finest and most suggestive poems recently published. We trust to have, ere long, more poetic work from his hand."—*British Quarterly Review*, April 1st, 1876.

"The writer has shown himself more critical than his friends, and the result is a gradual, steady progress in power, which we frankly acknowledge. . . . This long passage studded with graces."—*Academy*, April 29th, 1876.

"No lover of poetry will question his right to rank as a true poet. His mark is made upon the age, and his future must be a matter of enduring interest."—*Sunday Times*, March 26th, 1876.

"From first to last, the work is that of a true poet, and such as a true poet alone could accomplish."—*Standard*, March 27th, 1876.

"Told as only a poet could tell such stories, with clearness of outline and chastity of colour; with rich, vivid imagination, always moulded and guided by an instinct of true artistic moderation and restraint; with a pathos and a tenderness which bring home to us the loves and the sorrows even of those dim shades, and enable us to feel across the ages the quick throb of human brotherhood. The world has to thank him for four volumes of true and exquisite poetry."—*Liverpool Albion*, March 18th, 1876.

"English blank verse of an exquisite sort, than which the Laureate himself pens none more perfect."—*Illustrated News*, May 27th, 1876.

THE EPIC OF HADES.

BOOKS I. and III. and the COMPLETE WORK.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

“The author’s present volumes continue the promise of his earlier work, and advance it somewhat further towards fulfilment. In one sense the idea of his Epic is not only ambitious, but audacious, for it necessarily awakens reminiscences of Dante. Not unfrequently he is charmingly pathetic, as in his Helen and Psyche. There is considerable force and no small imagination in the description of some of the tortures in the ‘Tartarus.’ There is genuine poetical feeling in the ‘Olympus.’ . . . We might invite attention to many other passages. But it is more easy to give honest general praise than to single out particular extracts.”—*Times*, February 9th, 1877.

“The various symbolisms of the ancient myths are worked out with quite as much poetical feeling as in the former part. . . . The whole of this last portion of the poem is exceedingly beautiful. . . . Nor will any, except critics of limited view, fail to recognize in the Epic a distinct addition to their store of those companions of whom we never grow tired.”—*Athenæum*, March 3rd, 1877.

“Clytemnestra is a striking dramatic study. . . . The whole passage is as tragic as it is graphic. . . . Thus the author has achieved the task he set himself of showing that the myths of classic antiquity are capable of interpretation by a modern singer. A simple, lucid style, a spontaneous power of song, and a bright, fearless fancy enable him to seize and retain the sympathies of his audience. We believe that the Epic will approve itself to students as one of the most considerable and original feats of recent English poetry.”—*Saturday Review*, March 31st, 1877.

"We notice the same thoughtfulness and penetrating sympathy which have enabled the author, without doing violence to the sweet rounded grace of the old myths, to impart an undercurrent of present-day meaning and reference which should find for them a wider audience than could be expected for anything in the character of a severely Pagan revival merely. Thought, fancy, music, and penetrating sympathy we have here, and that radiant, unnamable suggestive delicacy which enhances the attraction with each new reading."—*British Quarterly Review*, April, 1877.

"The author most certainly possesses very great powers; but he is writing far too fast. We gladly repeat, however, that the present work is by far his greatest achievement; that the whole tone of it is noble, and that portions, more especially the concluding lines, are excessively beautiful."—*Westminster Review*, April, 1877.

"The work is one of which any singer might justly be proud. In fact, the Epic is in every way a remarkable poem, which to be appreciated must not only be read, but studied. It is that rarest of things, a book one would care to buy and keep."—*Graphic*, March 10th, 1877.

"This is in our opinion, in a high and serious sense, a remarkable poem—remarkable alike for thought, for music, and for fine suggestive quality. We look forward still to being made yet more the writer's debtors."—*Nonconformist*, February 21st, 1877.

"All his poems have proved him appreciative, thoughtful, and scholarly. 'The Epic of Hades' should rank highest of his work."—*Examiner*, February 24th, 1877.

"We do not hesitate to advance it as our opinion that 'The Epic of Hades' will enjoy the privilege of being classed amongst the poems in the English language which will live."—*Civil Service Gazette*, March 17th, 1877.

"Exquisite beauty of melodious verse. . . . A remarkable poem, both in conception and execution. We sincerely wish for the author a complete literary success."—*Literary World*, March 30th, 1877.

"The author never sinks low, but he often rises high, and thus you have poetry which pleases you as you read, which

shocks no sensibility, never wearies you, and often raises you into a serener atmosphere, in which the earthiness of the earth is lost sight of, and the pure and almost the divine are found. It will be surprising if the reader does not come to the conclusion that the author is a poet of very high order."—*Scotsman*, April 27th, 1877.

"Will live as a poem of permanent power and charm. It will receive high appreciation from all who can enter into its meaning, for its graphic and liquid pictures of external beauty, the depth and truth of its purgatorial ideas, and the ardour, tenderness, and exaltation of its spiritual life."—*Spectator*, May 5th, 1877.

"I have lately been reading a poem which has interested me very much, a poem called 'The Epic of Hades.' Many of you may never have heard of it; most of you may never have seen it. It is, as I view it, another gem added to the wealth of the poetry of our language."—*Mr. Bright's speech on Cobden, at Bradford*, July 25th, 1877.

"I have derived from it a deep pleasure and refreshment such as I never thought modern poetry could give."—*The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol*:

"This poem is not in the merely technical sense an epic, any more than the divine poem of Dante is a comedy. That was a comedy, as passing to a happy close; from Hell, through Purgatory, into Paradise. This is an epic, as it is concerned with one great action; for the soul of man is shown throughout it labouring towards what Mr. Tennyson has called the

One far-off divine event
To which the whole Creation moves.

In the blank verse of the 'Epic of Hades,' apt words are so simply arranged with unbroken melody, that if the work were printed as prose, it would remain a song, and every word would still be where the sense required it; not one is set in a wrong place through stress of need for a mechanical help to the music. The poem has its sound mind housed in a sound body."—*Professor Morley in The XIXth Century*, February, 1878.

THE EPIC OF HADES.

ILLUSTRATED QUARTO EDITION.



OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

“Of Mr. Chapman’s illustrations it is pleasant to be able to speak with considerable admiration, not only because they are a fortunate echo of the verse, and represent the feelings and incidents of the ‘Epic,’ but because of their intrinsic merits. There is in them a fine and high inspiration of an indefinite sort.”—*Athenæum*, March 29th, 1879.

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"It is doubtful whether Milton in these degenerate days would find many readers were he now to have published his mighty poems. An epic poem is indeed a trial of genius from which few can come out victorious; but lovers of the gentle muse of poetry will doubtless pass a pleasant hour and more in perusing this 'Epic of Hades,' and the author has been most fortunate in his illustrator. The seventeen designs are gems of drawing and conception, and the mezzotint is admirably adapted to the style of drawing and subject. This is truly a charming addition to the literary table. It is seldom one sees figure illustrations of such graceful and powerful beauty, and so thoroughly in sympathy with the visionary subjects of the author."—*Art Journal*, April, 1879.

"'The Epic of Hades' has already won a place among the immortals. The lovely and terrible figures of the Greek mythology have never received a more exquisite consecration than at the hands of the author, who, with the true divination of the poet, has known how to interpret in the modern spirit the profound and pathetic fables of antiquity without vulgarizing by modern affectations their divine simplicity. This beautiful poem appears now in an *édition de luxe*—a setting not unworthy of such gems. The seventeen designs, by George R. Chapman, only fail to satisfy us, as any representation of ideal masterpieces must fail to satisfy the reader to whose imagination the poet has lent wings. These designs are noteworthy for their tenderness of sentiment and their languid grace. The Demeter and Persephone are charming; but the charm of Demeter might perhaps be a little more august."—*Daily News*, April 2nd, 1879.

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"Throughout there is the true lyrical note, the 'cry' that seems to veil itself in the harmony of the language it chooses, and so makes itself only the more imperatively felt. Seldom, indeed, does it fall to the lot of the critic to come on such a prize as this. . . . No extracts could do justice to the exquisite tones, the felicitous phrasing and delicately wrought harmonies of some of these poems."—*Nonconformist*, March 27th, 1872.

"In all this poetry there is a purity and delicacy of feeling which comes over one like morning air."—*Graphic*, March 16th, 1872.

{SECOND SERIES.}

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(THIRD SERIES.)

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"'Evensong' is a poem in which the source of inspiration is the sublimity to which thought is led by the contemplation of metaphysical problems. It would be impossible to give any notion of the poem by quotations."—*Athenæum*, May 8th, 1875.

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GWEN:

A DRAMA IN MONOLOGUE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE EPIC OF HADES.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

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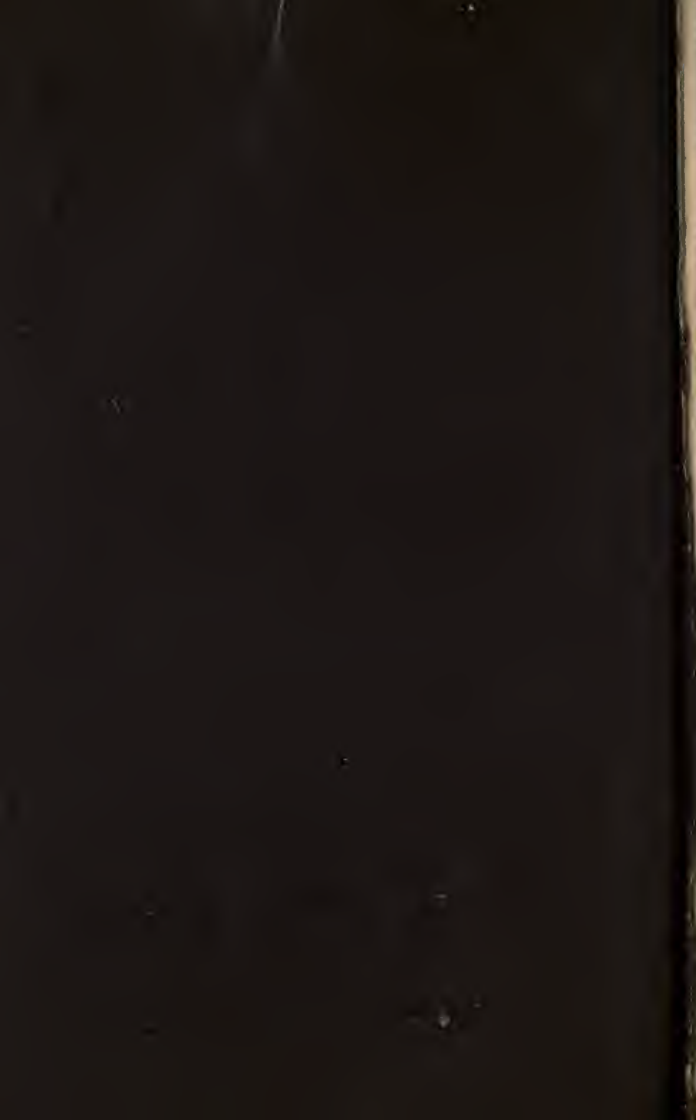
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‘Growing like Atlas, stronger for its load.’

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